

honorable works

2024

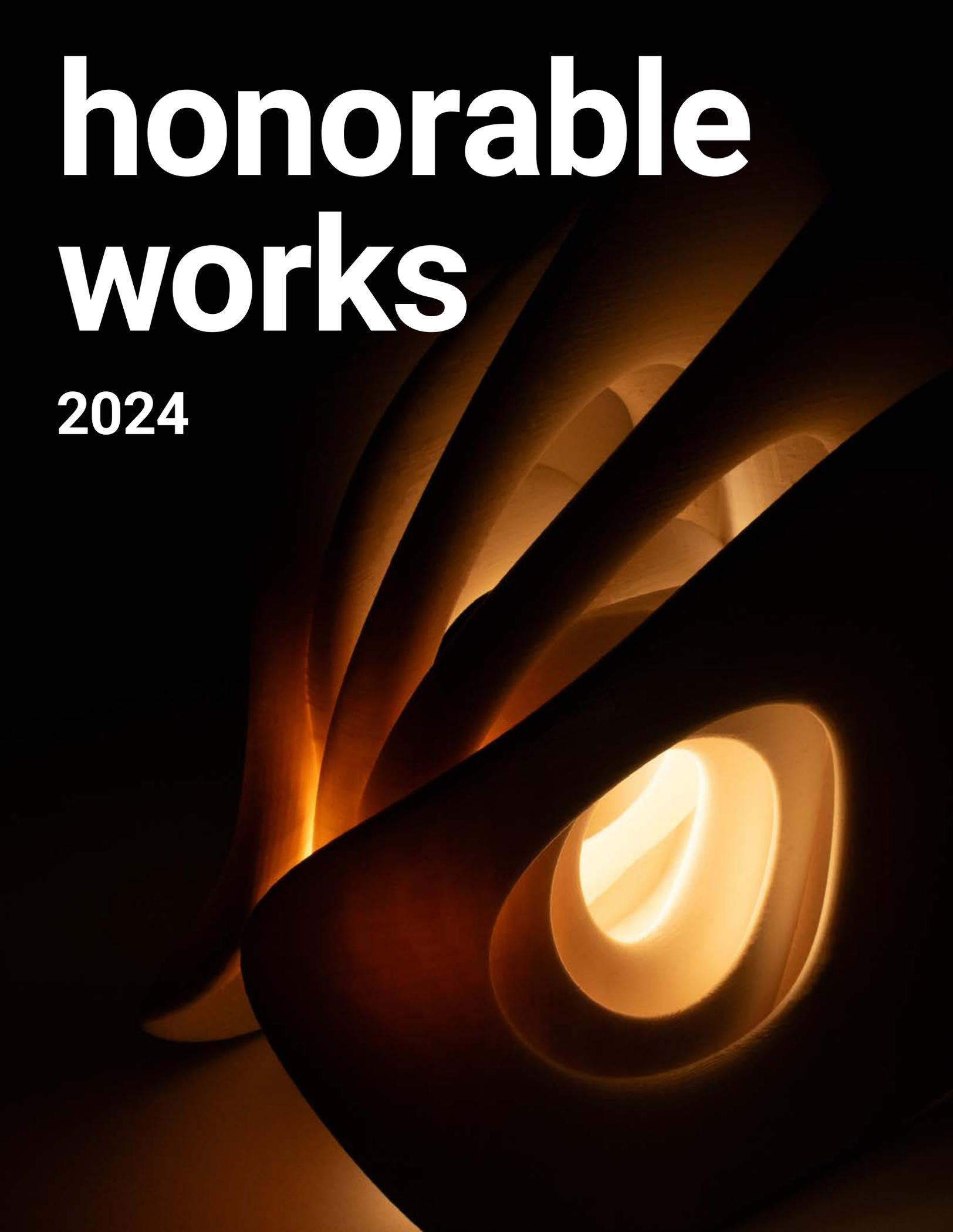


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Cover art by Sam Wilson Hoff. See more of Sam's work and learn about his artistic process on p. 12.

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letter from the editors



Hannah Cargo



Colin Votzmeyer



Josephine Geiger-Lee

Hello from the Honors Publications TAs!

Thank you for picking up—whether virtually or on paper—the latest issue of Honorable Works. This publication is always a treasure to make due to the passion found within its pages. Oftentimes, a piece done for class—whether it be a short story or a critical article or even a nonfiction reflection—will go forgotten amidst the shuffle of finals week and the instant relief that comes with winter or summer vacation. Honorable Works provides us an opportunity to return to the things honors students poured their hearts into throughout the semester.

For us as undergraduate teaching assistants, this project serves as an exciting capstone to the whole experience. For the first assignments in the spring—the orientation guide and the spring newsletter, which can be found [here](#)—students take the role of writers. They conduct interviews, find strong quotes, and work on a finalized piece. Once it is finished, they turn it over to us for proofreading, copyediting, and pol-

ishing. However, Honorable Works allows our student writers to serve, first and foremost, as editors.

Our students sought out creators they wanted to highlight and provided editorial treatment the piece might not have received without this publication. Together, we talked through the best line edits and how to make the piece truly shine. It's been an absolute joy watching our students shift from the mode of a writer to the mode of an editor, proving just how capable they are to wear the different hats of the publication process.

When we last penned a letter from the editors, two of us were brand-new to the process of teaching students and leading Honors Publications. Now, we have a full year under our belts, and we're thrilled to see how we've grown in both our editorial practices and our teaching abilities. Along with our students, we also contributed to this version of Honorable Works, bringing three more unique pieces to life.

So, as you navigate through Honorable Works, we hope you see the excitement and passion found

on every page. Travel through a piece about our very own Caitlin Clark (whose departure from the women's basketball team we will be mourning) to a commencement speech bidding farewell both to graduating seniors and to readers as they depart from our publication. Follow along as students analyze classics, both from the cult classic *Bee Movie* and from 19th Century British novelists Dickens and Austen. See how creativity manifests through a short story about armillary spheres (a term we had to look up when we first encountered it!), learn how nonfiction writing helps people tap into their life stories, and consider the beauty and craft in featured art pieces that model both architecture and animal skulls. Witness students writing on difficult topics such as traumatic brain injuries and police recruitment with grace.

Welcome to our third issue of Honorable Works.

Hannah Cargo (BA25), Josephine Geiger-Lee (BA25), and Colin Votzmeyer (BA25), 2023-2024 Honors Publications Editing Team

beyond the court

Featured Honors Student: Sara Adams
Edited by: Riley Dunn



Sara Adams

As a huge sports fan all her life, Sara Adams has always felt inspired by female athletes. The feeling was only amplified when Caitlin Clark caught the public's attention last year in the 2023 March Madness Tournament. By following Clark and the rest of the Iowa women's basketball team, Adams learned that she enjoyed commenting on games and following the players' analytics and stats. Soon, she discovered she wanted to report on games and enjoyed journalistic writing to do so. This led her to write a personal reflection on her journey to this discovery, which she hopes readers will take to heart.

Like many people in the country, I didn't know a single thing about women's basketball before the March Madness tournament in 2023. I am someone who will watch almost any sport you put on, but I never saw women's basketball on my channel selection. It changed that year with the rise of Caitlin Clark. Everyone I knew was captivated by her and her signature three-point shot from the logo. My first glimpse of this was seeing her buzzer beater against then-ranked No. 2 Indiana all over ESPN.

It was the first time I had seen women's basketball on my social media feed, and I was enthralled. After watching the video at least 20 times, I did what most people my age do when they see someone they admire: I followed her on Instagram—truly the highest honor, in my humble opinion. I watched many of Iowa's games during March Madness. I remember sitting in my living room watching the Final Four game against South Carolina too—although sitting may

be the wrong term. By the end of the game, I was pacing the entire living room. You would think that I knew someone on that team personally with the way I was losing my mind. My dad turned to me and told me how cool it would be that I would get to see her play in person next season. It hadn't clicked for me until then: I had already paid my acceptance fee to attend the University of Iowa (UI).

Fast forward to my first semester of college, and I woke up at 9 a.m. to buy every single game ticket for the women's team for the 2023-24 season. Never in my life have I chosen to wake up at 9 a.m. if I didn't have to. But I did for this team. I initially bought them to see Caitlin Clark in person, but when I choose to follow a sports team, I am one of those fans that needs to know as much as I possibly can. By the third home game, I knew the entire roster in and out. My favorite player on the women's team wasn't even Caitlin Clark—it was Molly Davis. There's something about an

underdog that I just love.

After I came home for Christmas break, I told my parents that I would need our living room TV for Iowa games. My dad laughed at me as I gave him the schedule. I just asked that he watch one game, and then we could go from there. It's safe to say I won him over. When these games were on, even my mom watched them. Sports are not her thing, but even she became invested in Iowa's team.

While we watched one of the games, I came to the conclusion that I wanted to major in journalism. I wanted to report on teams like this. Caitlin Clark loves to talk about the little boys and girls that she inspires, but that's definitely not the only group that she reaches. If I had not attended the UI and had the opportunity to see a sold-out Carver-Hawkeye Arena, I probably would not be a journalism major. When I was little, I wanted to work for ESPN, but that faded over time as my schools began to push STEM onto us. I wanted to cover



Caitlyn Clark in homecoming parade 2023, her senior year. Clark's rise to national and international prominence captivated many Iowa fans and inspired Adams to explore a career in sports writing. Photo by Tim Schoon.

only women's sports, something I had been told would be a fruitless pursuit. Why pursue a career in sports that no one watches? But now that Clark and this team have broken so many barriers in athletics today, my dream is even more of a possibility. People are watching women's sports more than ever, and Caitlin Clark has had a tremendous impact on that.

Because of her and this Iowa

women's basketball team, I may be able to accomplish a childhood dream of mine, covering only women's sports, whether it's basketball, soccer, gymnastics, or lacrosse. I want to give other women's sports the coverage they deserve. I want people to care about gymnastics beyond the Olympics and Simone Biles. There are so many talented gymnasts at the collegiate level. I would love

for people to know more soccer players than Alex Morgan or Megan Rapinoe. And most of all, I want people to get the opportunity to fall in love with the sport of lacrosse like I did when I played it. This passion, this desire, to expand the coverage of women's athletics in my professional career all arose with the explosion of Caitlin Clark and the Hawkeye basketball team. And this is only the beginning.

Sara Adams is a first-year honors student from Coral Springs, Florida, studying English and creative writing and journalism and mass communications. In her time at Iowa, she's worked as a news reporter for DITV, and she hopes to eventually work in sports journalism.

the B rated bee movie

Featured Honors Student: Hannah Zipf
Edited by: Nadia Shaaban



Hannah Zipf

Hannah Zipf wrote this analytical essay as a final paper for the Cult Cinema class taught by Dr. Emily Hill. Zipf described her experience writing the paper as “a fun way to more closely analyze one of my favorite movies and look at it through a new lens.” She described the class as “a meaningful analysis of movies and the impact they have on our society and an exercise in critical thinking.”

Since the beginning of the motion picture, films have been segregated into different categories, including cult films. Cult films are paradoxical: the films obtain qualities that are against dominant nature, whether in the quality of film, societal and political beliefs, or the initial money made at the box office. Although these are some basic features found in cult films, each movie is in the eye of the beholder and society as to whether a film reaches cult status. One movie that has the potential to become cult is the animated film *Bee Movie*. *Bee Movie*, released in 2007 by DreamWorks, surrounds Barry B. Benson, a honeybee who sues humanity for selling the honey that bees make with the help of his love interest, the human Vanessa. Although this seems like a normal

children’s film, certain elements surrounding the movie tell another story. The presence of a passionate audience base, anatomical elements such as transgressions and intertextualities, and political commentary on capitalism sets *Bee Movie* up to be recognized as a cult film in the future.

Bee Movie holds the cult quality of a passionate audience following. One of the most notorious aspects of cult films is the presence of an active audience even after a flop at the box office. With an initial budget of \$150 million, *Bee Movie* made just \$293 million at the worldwide box office (“*Bee Movie*”). Yet, despite *Bee Movie*’s flop at the box office, an audience following has ensued years after the release. Two Netflix subscribers in particular demonstrate the

admiration fans possess: one from the United Kingdom watched *Bee Movie* 357 times, and another from Spain watched it 281 times in a year (“What’s the Deal with *Bee Movie*?”). Now, while these numbers by themselves do not obtain cult status, they show that people are committed to the film.

Furthermore, almost 10 years after the film was released in 2016, the film resurfaced on all social media platforms. For example, “the entire text of the film’s screenplay began popping up on internet forums such as Tumblr, Reddit and 4Chan” (TrekkieMark). People share what they care about, so the screenplay being posted online indicates admiration. And since the fans posted the screenplay on forums not pertaining to the film and wreaked havoc on other

conversations, it holds a sense of rebellion. As Mathijs and Mendik explain, “audiences of cult movies stress their rebellious attitude,” and thus, spamming the internet aids in the audience’s identification as cult (2005).

Anatomical elements of Bee Movie also correlate to cult films. One of the anatomical elements present is transgression, which surpasses the common understanding of good and bad. It often is achieved “through [challenging one] or more ‘conventions’ of filmmaking, which may include sty-

world” (Ross 131). As an interspecies relationship is portrayed throughout the film, the idea of bestiality is implied. Bestiality is prohibited, and even punishable under United States law (Holoyda). Thus, if the film promotes a dating relationship with an animal, and an attribute of that is illegal under American law, it demonstrates transgression which aids in its journey to become a cult classic.

Intertextuality, another anatomical element of cult films, is found in Bee Movie. Intertextuality is “how a film invites comparison,

scenes devoted more time to intertextualities. For example, the pool scene in Bee Movie parallels a pool scene in the 1967 film *The Graduate*. In both movies, the main character is lounging on a pool floaty while their parents are questioning them about their future. Additionally, the Bee Movie heist scene is reminiscent of the heist plan found in *Ocean’s Eleven*. A common feature of the *Ocean’s Eleven* heist plan is that the mastermind walks through the plan as it is occurring, as found in Bee Movie. Barry narrates each step of

[T]he pool scene in Bee Movie parallels a pool scene in the 1967 film *The Graduate*. In both movies, the main character is lounging on a pool floaty while their parents are questioning them about their future.

listic, moral, or political qualities” (Mathijs & Mendik 2).

In Bee Movie the relationship between the human Vanessa and Barry, a bee, is a moral transgression. As the film continues, Barry befriends Vanessa, and Vanessa breaks up with her boyfriend to be with Barry. The idea of a bee and a human dating may seem comical, but “much more than mere entertainment, under cinema’s surface lie ideologies that play a huge role in shaping our perspective on the

connections and linkages with other films and parts of culture” (Mathijs & Mendik 3). Many references to other known films, books, and companies are found in this movie. Some tiny references make appearances throughout the film, such as Honron, a honey company whose logo looks and name sounds like the former oil company Enron, a cameo of Winnie the Pooh and Piglet, and a bee night show host that resembled Larry King in appearance and manners. Other

the heist as it happens with background music. This mirrors how Danny Ocean describes the heist to his team members, creating a connection between the two films. As intertextuality is crucial to a cult film, and Bee Movie has vast amounts of cultural references, Bee Movie has the potential to be recognized as a cult classic.

More than the specific anatomical elements, cult films have a characteristic of being “deviant” in areas such as the political ideals

More than the specific anatomical elements, cult films have a characteristic of being “deviant” in areas such as the political ideals that they broadcast.

that they broadcast. In *Bee Movie* the political battle on communism is fought. The basic Marxist view of society is how a class struggle exists between the proletariat—those who sell their labor—and the bourgeois—the “owners of the means of production who sell commodities produced by the proletariat” (Monteagudo et al.). To end class struggle, the proletariat must revolt, and a society must emerge where everyone shares the wealth. Throughout the film, the bee population is established as the proletariat class and humanity as the bourgeoisie.

The beginning of the film focuses on the next generation of bees entering the workforce. Upon the tour of the honey factory, the tour guide mentions, “and you’ll be happy to know that bees as a species haven’t had a day off in 27 billion years” (*Bee Movie*). The bees constantly work towards their survival, a feature of the proletariat, through the production of honey.

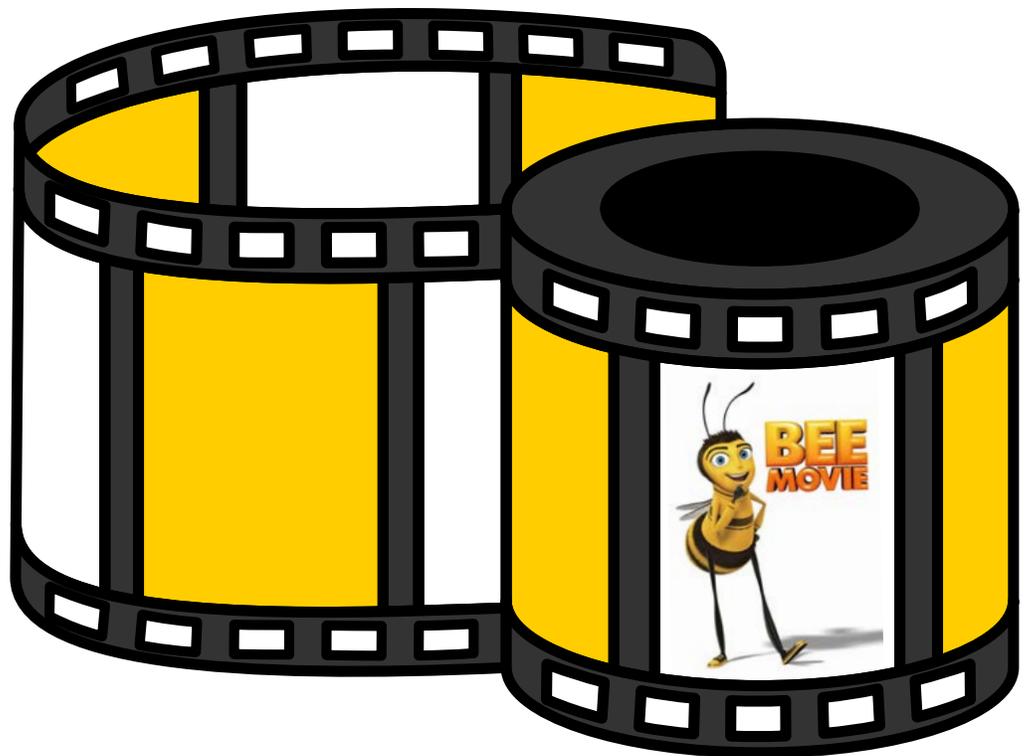
After meeting Vanessa, Barry is introduced to honey in grocery stores and is appalled at the ex-

ploitation of a bee’s livelihood for human profit. He exclaims, “This is our whole life, and you’re taking it without permission! This is stealing! You’re taking our homes, our schools, our hospitals... It’s all we have!” (*Bee Movie*).

Meanwhile, humanity is the bourgeoisie. When Barry flies to the honey farms to investigate how the honey is stolen from the bees, he overhears the beekeepers saying, “They make the honey, and

we make the money” (*Bee Movie*). As the bourgeoisie, the beekeepers, and humanity at large, sell the commodity made by the bees for profit.

After seeing the bees treated harshly, Barry sues (and wins) humanity to create restitution for all the honey that has been stolen, correlating with the proletariat uprising needed to create a communist society. Together, humans and bees developed a society where



Graphic by Tara Joiner

“This is our whole life, and you’re taking it without permission! This is stealing! You’re taking our homes, our schools, our hospitals... It’s all we have!”

both classes respect one another and have equal worth, mirroring the ideal society from Marxist values. Bee Movie’s demonstration of the Marxist Theory is a deviance from dominant thought, as Communism is not the common political viewpoint in America, which is a key feature of cult film.

The Bee Movie, deviant in nature, won the hearts and minds of

people in this generation. With an unimpressive box office, an audience following ensued with spamming people on various social media platforms with the entire script and creating memes out of admiration for the film.

The transgressive element of interspecies dating defies the current moral law of acceptable relationships and aided in its evaluation

of becoming a cult. Furthermore, many references to popular culture icons of the time established the intertextuality found within the film. Lastly, political commentary going against the dominant viewpoint exuded from the film.

After analyzing its fanbase, anatomical elements, and political commentary, it is evident that Bee Movie will become a cult classic.

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Hannah Zipf is a second year honors student studying neuroscience. After graduation, Zipf plans to apply to medical school with the eventual goal of becoming a psychiatrist.

the armillary sphere

Featured Honors Student: Autumn Mayer
Edited by: Kate Andersen



Autumn Mayer

“The Armillary Sphere” is a short story written by Autumn Mayer for her Foundations of Creative Writing class. The prompt for the assignment was to write a three-page short story centered around an object that’s important to the main character. The object in this piece is the titular armillary sphere. The work focuses on a boy, Alexandre, and his father, Étienne. Alexandre is a character from a larger personal work Mayer is writing. “The armillary sphere is a reference point through which Étienne can think about things like fate, the universe, and the mysteries of the future,” she explains.

Étienne gazed at the armillary sphere sitting atop his bookshelf, allowing himself to be lost in thoughts of its incomprehensible mathematical nature and tangled history.

Also known as a spherical astrolabe, an armillary sphere is a model of celestial bodies. Its interlocking rings are centered around either the Earth or the sun—Ptolemaic or Copernican—and represent lines of latitude and longitude, the equator, and meridians. The sphere was used historically to demonstrate and determine the positions of stars and planets. It was developed twice, once in second-century Greece and again in fourth-century China.

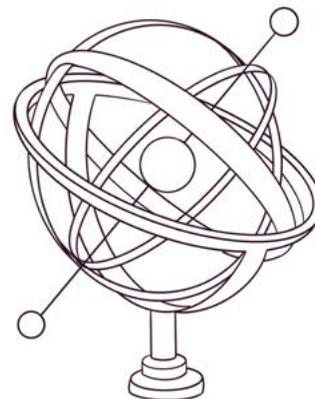
Aside from this handful of memorable facts, Étienne did not understand how it worked; to him, it was simply a beautiful, antique object, glinting a dull bronze in the evening light that, only at this hour, found the exact angle to cut between the tight-together buildings of the Latin Quarter.

“Papa?” Étienne’s four-year-old son Alexandre asked, following his father’s gaze. “What is it?”

The boy was sitting on the rusty carpet in front of Étienne’s cluttered desk, surrounded by meticulously organized Legos, blue in one pile, beige in another. The instructions for the set—a relatively simple depiction of London’s skyline, probably intended for a 10-year-old—were laid out in front of him, and he’d already gotten an impressive start on the foundation of Big Ben.

“It’s an astrolabe,” Étienne answered. The name he had first learned, the result of a confusion about the spherical version and the flat, sprang to his tongue before the more technically correct term. “Or an armillary sphere, more accurately. Astronomers used to use them, and a different flat version, for their calculations. Sailors too.”

Both of them looked at the device in silence for a long moment. The dusty sunlight, quickly fading, burnished the rings gold and highlight-



Graphic by Tara Joiner

ed the etchings: numbers to denote the sun’s ascension in degrees and hours, astrological signs.

Étienne glanced back at his little Pisces, whose small brows were scrunched in thought. Then he shrugged and returned to the Legos, becoming instantly absorbed once more. With his black hair and dark eyes, Alexandre looked almost nothing like his mother; he looked like Étienne had when he was younger, and Étienne couldn’t decide if he was grateful for fewer reminders of his ex-wife,

who had divorced him almost a year ago, or disappointed by the unceasing reflection of his own face. Would it be worse, he wondered, for Alexandre to inherit his mother's cold, beautiful distance (like she thought she was a star, one whose position in the astrolabe he could never discover) or his father's obsessive quest for an ever-eluding satisfaction, one he could not seem to find in even the

to do with *The Tempest* and its unknowable meaning. A thud rattled his chipped mug of pens, and Étienne jolted from his thoughts once more.

Alexandre, he realized, had attempted to climb the bookshelf. Now he was starting a second try.

Étienne exclaimed, "Hey! Alexandre, get down!"

"Why?" Alexandre asked, turning to look at his father. His hands

neighbors wince. "I want the astrolabe! Astrolabe!"

"Astrolabe," Étienne corrected, exasperated.

Alexandre stood and pointed resolutely at the astrolabe, chanting, "Astrolabe! Astrolabe!"

Finally, Étienne brought it down, settled it on the floor, and sat beside it. A Lego stabbed him in the thigh. Alexandre calmed immediately and, Legos forgotten beside

There it was again, that stubborn curiosity to know everything, to understand everything. Except now, it was going to result in a split forehead or blunt force trauma via hardcover.

vast universe's mysteries?

The boy would be five in two days, and even thinking of it gave Étienne an uneasy feeling. Recently, he had begun asking a multitude of questions, some of which Étienne wasn't sure how to answer. Why do birds fly in Vs? Why is that lady—the Venus of Urbino—not wearing any clothes? Why did Maman leave you? If his unending curiosity kept up as he grew, Étienne would go gray before his son was 35. He didn't know if he was capable of raising a fully functioning adult; sometimes he could barely function himself.

Étienne drifted back into his PhD thesis—working title, *The Lyrical and Sensual of the Venetian Renaissance, Early- to Mid-16th Century*—and silently scolded himself for his minutes-long distraction. The astrolabe and the unknowable universe it represented had nothing

clung to the third shelf, feet planted on the first. The rows of hardcover books already made the shelf sag in the middle, and the weight of a four-year-old threatened to bring the entire thing crashing down in an explosion of dust and paper.

"Because you'll get hurt," Étienne said, rounding his desk with the intention of lifting the child down.

"No, I won't," he said. "I want the astrolabe."

There it was again, that stubborn curiosity to know everything, to understand everything. Except now, it was going to result in a split forehead or blunt force trauma via hardcover. How much worse would things be when he was older?

Étienne picked Alexandre off the bookshelf and set him down in the center of his circle of spread-out Legos.

"Papa!" Alexandre screamed, making Étienne and possibly the

his feet, reached to spin the rings. Étienne tensed, waiting for the enthusiastic spin to destroy the rings or pinch Alexandre's fingers. But his son's touch was gentle, and as the rings moved around each other and the central globe, he sat transfixed by the riveting rotation of the universe in metal.

Étienne couldn't help being fascinated too, a new, childlike wonder becoming the lens through which he looked at the object, which until a moment before had simply been a pretty old thing sitting on a shelf. It occurred to him there might be a third option, a future in which Alexandre escaped the flaws of both his parents. Perhaps he would be defined by the kind of curiosity that sparked creation. Perhaps the unhurried spin of the astrolabe's golden rings was a sign of his son's future desire to cup the furthest stars in the palms of his hands.

Autumn Mayer is a second-year honors student from Green Bay, Wisconsin studying English creative writing and French. In their time at Iowa, they've been an Honors Writing Fellow, copyeditor for *Wilder Things Magazine*, and a French translator for the Translate Iowa Project, and they hope to enter the publishing industry as an editor or agent after graduation.

to be a writer

Featured Honors Student: Delia Hallett
Edited by: Josephine Geiger-Lee



Delia Hallett

Delia Hallett wrote this piece to work through a complex web of emotions that have been brewing all semester. This year, in the wake of mental health struggles and her submersion in a vast body of excellent poems and essays, she has come face to face more than ever before with the purpose of writing. Originally written as a unit reflection for her generative honors workshop course, this piece grapples with the relationship between serving oneself and serving others through writing, seeing unexpected value in both.

On February 13th, my friend convinced me to see a counselor. They did all the work—they sent the email, got me an appointment, they even walked me to Student Health. It was a simple meeting—not therapy—just talking about my options. The first thing I remember when I walked into his office, heart pounding, was apologizing for my T-shirt. The shirt in question is printed with the custom phrase “Drugs / Piss / Anime Girls.” It means a lot to me, but I’m sure it means almost nothing to anyone else. I meant to cover it with a sweater before my appointment, but I had forgotten. “You don’t need to apologize for your apparel,” he said.

Once we got to talking, I told him why it had taken me so long to make an appointment. “I don’t like talking about my personal issues,” I said. “I feel predictable. I feel like I’m wasting people’s time. And it’s just embarrassing.”

He thought for a minute. “We need to fight to prioritize ourselves. We need to fight to be kinder to

ourselves. Don’t feel ashamed of talking about yourself, because sometimes it’s necessary.”

I thought what he said was beautiful. Only later did I realize it was also predictable, cliché, simplistic—all the things I was afraid of being.

That same night, a friend of mine read a piece she had written aloud. It was a poem about the struggle to vent, the frustration of talking about yourself. She used the phrase “anti-novelty beam” to describe that feeling. The moment you open your mouth, your thoughts become infinitely lamer under the gaze of your audience.

The very next day, we discussed “In Praise of Navel Gazing” by Melissa Febos in my honors workshop. After the previous day, this essay was extremely impactful. I have been thinking lately, not just about my hang-ups around venting, but also about my writing insecurities. Chief among them: the worry that it’s cloying and insufferable that I’m often incapable of writing about anything other

than my crushes, sex, bulimia, and my parents yelling at each other. “The genre of victimhood is always so crowded,” as Febos facetiously states on page 5. This is what the devils on our shoulders tell us. It’s the same reason people feel the need to specify that they aren’t fans of Taylor Swift, the same reason I’m embarrassed to enjoy Lana Del Rey. There is an expectation that every song female singers write is actually about their real, actual ex-boyfriend. This is obviously untrue, but it’s still what we see in women’s songs, because it’s what we expect from works dealing with intimate interpersonal details and, indeed, the body. Febos opened my eyes to the sexist roots of my insecurities, and I was able to realize my duty to weed them out.

I need to write about all my personal problems, as Febos said. There is no way for me to be a sterile writer, and I have known this for a long time. Writing is not a detached manipulation to create a product, like cold pottery. It is necessarily about processing

trauma, whether that be personal or interpersonal or cultural or generational or spanning all of mankind. As Dean Young writes in *The Art of Recklessness*, strong poetry is primitive—an exploration of primary human dilemmas, “the instinctual, visceral, sexual, rogue, absurd.” (12) There is nothing about poetry that is not personal—we can’t escape our personhood through an audience. Writers have no duty to make ourselves impartial, and since we have this therapeutic tool, we may as well use it.

I had been trying desperately for weeks to write something about my eating disorder. It is enormously difficult to be honest in your writing when you don’t want to seem cliché, like you’re fishing for sympathy, or when you don’t want to admit realities to yourself. But Bernadette Mayer writes without inhibitions and a filter, and she doesn’t try to change the past once it’s left its imprint on the page like a sunspot. I’ve been using her writing experiments for inspiration, and we’ve been reading her work in my Advanced Poetry Seminar. *Midwinter Day*, *The Golden Book of Words*, and *Studying Hunger Journals* have meant a lot to me. The moment I divorced myself from the idea of disguising my pain, the moment I accepted that “avoiding a secret subject can be its own kind of bondage” (Febos 27), I was able to write about Bernadette Mayer and control and food and sleep and my insecurities and my voice. It worked. And I need to do it more, because the best things I’ve ever written have been immensely therapeutic.

Last year, I wrote a short play about my negative experience

the first time I had sex. Writing it was very therapeutic, but I never planned on showing it to anyone—partially because of the people involved and the intensely personal story, but also partially because I assumed it would be of no use to anybody. But then I read something Febos wrote that caught me by surprise: “I didn’t write a memoir to free myself, though in the process I did” (8). Her motivations seemed to oppose mine. I wrote that play to free myself; it was entirely a selfish endeavor. Febos wrote her memoir to help the people who needed to hear her story. And yet, she freed herself anyway. If I freed myself, then could some people who need to hear my story be helped? It’s such a simple, cliché, predictable thought, but it had literally never crossed my mind. It made perfect sense. Why had I written the play? Because I had strong thoughts and feelings that I had never seen onstage or anywhere else. Because I had never seen my story told anywhere. Maybe I could share that story. Maybe I could be that solace. I still don’t know if I want to share this particular play, but that one sentence opened my eyes to the massive worth that my so-called “personal, irrelevant” writing could have.

Writing personal stories that represent other people’s experiences is beautiful. When you write a story that someone else relates to, it’s like you’re exposing the human condition, laying it bare, if only for a moment. You’re gaining a glimpse into this mysterious thing that connects us all. If I wrote this, and it makes me feel this way, and it also makes you feel the same way, then maybe we are the same.

In Magdalena Zurawski’s striking essay “Being Human Is an Occult Practice,” she tells us that this is the heart of the literary tradition, the human practice that has been stunted by “starving those disciplines that refuse to view students as nothing more than future laborers” (2). In poetry, she writes that “life extends itself in and through us,” and we are free to view ourselves as participants in the human experience (9). It makes us feel less alone. If writing has such immense power to connect us, to comfort us individually and collectively, then why am I ever embarrassed about it? I need to be a brave writer. I need to write like I have nothing to lose, because I love this, and I don’t want to stop doing this, and I don’t want to set rules for myself that I have no reason to follow.

So why did I feel the need to apologize for my shirt? As I left his office, the man who met with me at Student Health complimented me on it, and reiterated, “You don’t need to apologize for your apparel.” Maybe that’s internalized sexism, too. Maybe it’s insecurity about seeming too silly or vulgar. The phrase on the shirt comes from an inside joke that I have with my close friends who make up the Nightingale Writers’ Group. The shirts were designed by one of my closest friends using the *Blade Runner* font. We all had to pay him \$20 to order them for us. It brought us closer together. It is a collaborative piece of writing: personal, poetic, and authentic. So as I left Student Health, I accepted the compliment, like I would—and will—for any other piece of writing I’m proud of.

Delia Hallett is a second-year honors student from Xenia, Ohio studying English and creative writing. After graduating in 2025, she hopes to gain teaching certification and work in adult and prisoner education.

3d storytelling

Featured Honors Student: Sam Wilson Hoff
Edited by: Raezel Valencia



Sam Wilson Hoff

As a 3D designer, Sam Wilson Hoff prides himself on designing with intention. He keeps both his original vision and the functionality of the pieces in mind as he crafts his designs. In each of these following pieces, Wilson Hoff has centered the design around a different idea and story, ensuring that each adheres both to his creative vision while still remaining practical. He pursues 3D design as an outlet for his love of visual art and storytelling. By using a project's prompt, he is able to create an object that he finds both visually pleasing and which successfully communicates an idea or concept important to him.

Red Pillow



Red Pillow (red and pink upholstery fabric, white leather, plywood, foam, Dacron, and Poly-fil)
Named after Wilson Hoff's childhood stuffed animal "Blue Pillow," this piece was created to convey the idea of an "adult" version of his childhood companion for the class Forms and Textiles. To attain this aim, he used bold colors and soft, rounded forms, creating the idea of something both inviting and playful. Wanting to specifically call back to how children drag their stuffed animals across the floor, the back of the seat doubles as a handle allowing the chair to be dragged around in a similar way.

three piece furniture set



Three Piece Furniture Set (Baltic Birch plywood, CNC cutter)
In this assignment for Furniture II, Wilson Hoff had to take a previous work and create a furniture set to match that project. He used a bus stop he created in a previous semester. It includes a stool, a side table, and coat rack. To simulate the bus stop's exploration of many complicated and harsh angles, Wilson Hoff leans into the many angles by intersecting planes and utilizing a strong use of line. He wanted each piece to be capable of being taken apart and stored flatly, so he ensured that each of these pieces held their shape by being slotted together rather than using any hardware, designing with both the construction and form in mind.

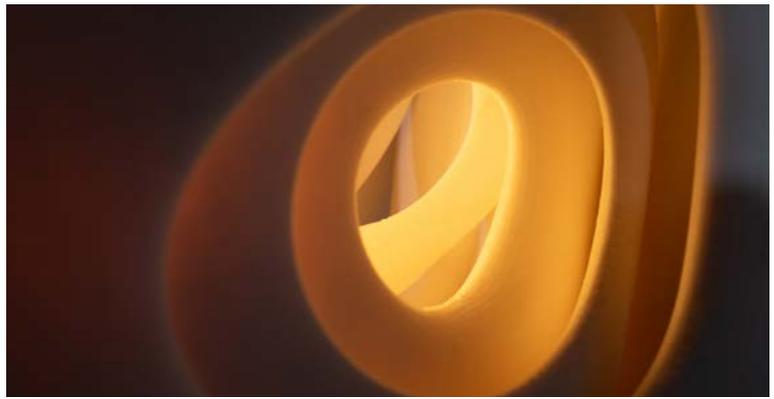
architect pavillion

Architect Pavilion (3DSMax)

Tasked in Interior Design with designing a pavilion inspired by a building designed by a famous architect, Wilson Hoff took on the works of Charles Gwathmey, specifically the Gwathmey Residence that sparked Gwathmey's career. Using simple shapes like cylinders and boxes, Wilson Hoff created a modern design that emulates the residence and displays the life and works of Gwathmey using very intentional openings and window placement to highlight objects.



Q



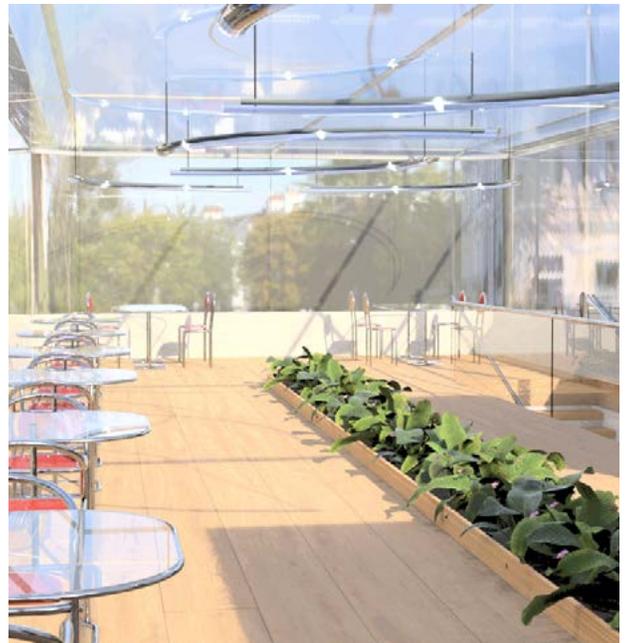
Q (3DSMax, ABS plastic, 3D printer)
For Product Design, Wilson Hoff was assigned to make a table lamp. He designed this lamp to evoke the idea of a fire illuminating the empty spaces of an animal skull. He created this effect by making layered rings behind the eyes. This allows the light to taper out with the middle making the opening to the eye the brightest. The top's gaps where light is allowed to peek through is meant to seem like the tips of a fire flickering.

three piece dining set



Three Piece Dining Set (metal and plywood)
Tasked with making a decorative vase, bowl, and candle holder out of bent metal and wood for a class called Product Design, Wilson Hoff had to ensure that these pieces were visually cohesive and utilized both materials. Wilson Hoff chose to keep the profiles thin with lots of strong linework, keeping the shapes tapered to convey a sense of delicacy. He wanted to simulate the visual of spotlights taking a circle on the piece and zooming out, giving each piece a dynamic line of action.

bonum



Bonum (3DSMax)

Inspired by Wilson Hoff's trip to London, this restaurant's interior design imitates the English culture he experienced there while still ensuring that it fits in with the aesthetic of Iowa City. He created a three-story restaurant for his Interior Design class. On the first floor, the use of tubular steel is a reference to the Orbit Tower, a steel structure built in Olympic Park to commemorate the 2012 London Olympics. On the second floor, the s-shaped booths pay homage to the crinkle crinkle walls popular in England. Finally, the third floor employs a garden aesthetic meant to emulate the idea of tea time amidst greenery.

Sam Wilson Hoff is a spring 2024 University Honors graduate from Des Moines, Iowa. While a student at Iowa he studied 3D design and managed to display his works at a public gallery. He hopes to advance his knowledge of 3D design by studying architecture in graduate school.

traumatic brain injuries

Featured Honors Student: Berkley Johnson
Edited by: Hannah Cargo



Berkley Johnson

Berkley Johnson wrote this personal narrative for honors credit in her Trauma Across the Lifespan course. There, she learned about how different events affect a person throughout their life, and she chose to write about her family's experience – as well as how that experience inspired her studies in neuropsychology. She hopes that this piece is informative not only about the effects of traumatic brain injury, but also that it shows how it affects family and friends.

On July 28th, 2021, around nine in the morning, my two younger brothers and I were awoken by a pounding on our door. When I finally came to consciousness, I heard my brother, Quincey, talking to what sounded like two men at the front door. I was perplexed but not worried until I heard the words which I will never forget, "...airlifted to the University of Iowa Hospital." The events after this moment are a blur to me, and I cannot remember how I even made it down the stairs. I turned on autopilot. Being the older sister, I took over talking to the two police at my front door. They told me that my father had been struck by a vehicle and was in severe condition. They asked us to call our mother, and I will never forget the way she cried out when they told her.

The police did not know if my

father was alive, only that he was in such bad condition he could not be taken to our hometown hospital. The next 15 minutes felt like an eternity. I began frantically cleaning the kitchen to avoid looking into my brothers' eyes as they sat in the living room and cried. I was seventeen years old but felt like a grown adult at that moment. I prayed like I never had before, begging God to hold my father in the palm of his hand. When my phone began ringing, I snapped back into the moment. It was my mother. My oldest brother had by then returned home from work to be with us, and my three brothers and I huddled around the phone waiting for the news. Although he was badly injured, my father was alive.

We took a collective deep breath. I think we all were holding our

breath until then. Although he was alive, our worries were not eased. My father was an extremely athletic person, and that morning he had been biking on the highway, training for the Ironman he signed up for which was merely weeks away. I went into his home office and read over the paper acknowledging his future participation in the Ironman with tears in my eyes. Knowing that he had been hit on the highway by a vehicle going a minimum of fifty miles an hour made my stomach turn. The next call we received was from my aunt, who was already on the way to our house, so we did not have to be alone. Family is everything. Finally, my mom called back, and informed us that though he was unconscious and in severe condition, my father had moved his feet and was not paralyzed.

I was aware that it would be a long

journey for my father, and that my family and I needed to rally around him for it. I was right. Over two years later, my dad is still altered from the traumatic brain injury and other injuries he endured. He is back at work, but he has had personality changes, emotional challenges, and is unable to exercise as he used to. That being said, my family is lucky, and we realize how thankful we must be.

I had always been interested in psychology, but my dad's accident gave me a new and invigorating passion for the field of neuropsychology, specifically the assessment and rehabilitation of traumatic brain injuries. I want it to become my future career and to be able to give back to this field after how much the rehabilitation staff helped my father become himself again.

While doing research for this paper, I came across Nancy Kanwisher, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She shared the story of her friend Bob, who had lasting challenges after getting a brain tumor removed (Kanwisher, 2021). Bob struggled with navigation and spatial visualization before his surgery, as well as after. Even though the tumor was removed, he suffered lasting damage to his brain. Although the story of Bob's tumor is different than my father's,

they are similar in how the brain reacts to trauma and damage. Traumatic brain injuries have many side effects.

According to Dr. Gary Kraus, a person can become aggressive, have trouble with balance, be more irritable, and have difficulty multitasking (Kraus, 2023). Another common occurrence in traumatic brain injuries is denial. Not being able to cognitively process information the same as before their injury can be scary and can cause them to downplay or even deny a brain injury (Kraus, 2023). My father's biggest fear was not being able to return to work, and so anyone finding out about his injury made him feel extremely anxious. The first time my brothers and I were able to visit my father in the hospital, he tried extremely hard to seem like he was perfectly fine to not make us worry, even telling us that his rehabilitation therapists said he was "100 percent."

During my father's rehabilitation, the doctor had him draw a clock using only his memory. Professor Nancy Kanwisher at MIT did a similar test on Bob when she learned of his spatial troubles. Instead of a clock, she had him draw the floor plan of his house (Kanwisher, 2021). The results were the same as both Bob and my father were unable to visualize what these things looked like.

Although he had looked at a clock almost every day of his life, my dad could not draw one. He had a problem imagining and reproducing the parts of the clock just as Bob had trouble reproducing the layout of his floorplan.

The clock assessment is now incredibly relevant to my life as I have joined the research lab of a doctoral student doing her dissertation on traumatic brain injuries. I transfer written traumatic brain injury tests to an online database, re-scoring the previous clock assessments to fit, and comparing the data to similar stroke and dementia tests.

In the future, I aspire to aid people in their traumatic brain injury rehabilitation. In the course Trauma Across the Lifespan, I learned about how traumatic events are long-lasting and take much determination and courage to overcome. I am looking forward to learning even more about this field through future classes, research groups, and graduate education. My main takeaway from my research thus far is that neuropsychological rehabilitation is ongoing and, for many patients, a lifelong process. I owe my motivation to pursue this career to my father's accident, and though I would not wish it on anyone, it most definitely changed the trajectory of my life for the better.

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Berkley Johnson is a second-year honors student from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She is majoring in psychology, minoring in human relations, and working towards a certificate in resilience and trauma-informed perspectives. After her undergraduate degree, she hopes to further her education as well as research work in graduate school.

the effectiveness of police recruitment campaigns

Featured Honors Student: Solenn Vincent
Edited by: Colin Votzmeyer



Solenn Vincent

Solenn Vincent wrote this essay for Katlyn O’Shaughnessy’s honors rhetoric class. In the project, O’Shaughnessy simply tasked her students with analyzing an advertisement. Vincent chose to analyze the community-focused New Zealand police recruitment advertisements—as compared to the violence- and power-focused United States police ads—after a friend showed her both advertisements during a casual conversation about police brutality in the U.S. Frequently concerned with social justice issues, Vincent found the New Zealand ad specifically interesting because of its light-hearted, human interest aspects not frequently found in such campaigns in the U.S. “There’s a lot that we can improve on [in the U.S.], and it’s something that I think we should be aware of,” Vincent said.

“Black lives matter!” shouts the crowd, holding signs saying, “Abolish the Police!” Lines of armed cops stare them down, wearing military gear like they’re facing an army—not U.S. citizens. Those police fire tear gas and bullets into the crowd. They attack their own citizens, the ones they are sworn to protect. How did this violence come to be? The morality of the police is currently one of the most controversial social topics internationally. Countries are different in their approach to police recruitment and training. Some,

such as the U.S., are more militaristic in their attitude toward police, portraying them as violent, powerful people. Meanwhile, others such as New Zealand promote the importance of having police that both protect and connect with their communities. Crime rates are also drastically different: In 2016, New Zealand had approximately nine gun violence deaths for a rate of 1.87 per one million people while the U.S. had 106 deaths per one million, according to NPR. The “Do You Care Enough To Be A Cop?” New Zealand recruitment video

uses appeals to community values and humor to promote the type of employees that they are searching for. As police brutality and poor public opinion of police increase in the U.S., it is time for our country to consider its recruitment processes and the types of people it wants to attract to these valuable positions.

Throughout the campaign video, the New Zealand police recruitment team uses humor and peaceful imagery to encourage a specific type of potential member. Playing off of the stereotypes of police TV shows, the police in the video

do ridiculous stunts such as flipping off of cars and leaping over fences. While that may appear to convey that cops are constantly in the field fighting crime, that is not the case. As the video reveals, police do a variety of different tasks, such as tracking suspects, helping members of the community, connecting with the youth,

of New Zealand's police presence. For example, a police officer helps an elderly man cross the street while a man stops in the crosswalk, dancing to a popular song to cheer up the drivers waiting. The possible tension that this situation could have created is dissipated by the amusing response. The song is a nod to popular culture

are also human beings making difficult decisions regarding public safety—and for the police to evaluate how their behavior can make them appear to the public.

The recruitment team also conveys its light-hearted approach through its cinematography choices, like bright lighting, a sunny color scheme, and an informative

As police brutality and poor public opinion of police increase in the U.S., it is time for our country to consider its recruitment processes and the types of people it wants to attract to these valuable positions.

and maintaining order within the department and beyond. New Zealand's focus on the community service aspect of policing, which is the most significant component of the job, helps the public to think of police as friendly neighbors. This contrasts sharply from approaches that focus on weaponry and tracking down perpetrators common in the U.S., painting a negative portrait of the police experience and less of what the job mostly entails, which is community work. New Zealand's approach encourages people who are peaceful, generous, thoughtful, and caring to apply. This counters stereotypes of the police and police work in the U.S., which culturally tend to focus on violent behavior and less on bonding with the community.

Additionally, examples of humor in the campaign continue to emphasize the light-hearted nature

and how the police department is socially aware and connected to its audience. While a possible suspect is chased throughout the video, the scenario concludes with a dog revealed as the culprit. This approach creates a memorable, happy ending and further establishes New Zealand's goal of a zero-crime country—because the only "criminal" was a dog taking a lady's purse rather than something more serious like a murderer or robber. The inclusion of bloopers at the end of the video establishes the crucial understanding that the cops in the campaign are actual cops, not actors, and they are enjoying their job. They laugh as they mess up their lines and fail their stunts, which makes them seem to the viewers like genuine people who love their job and the community they serve. It is important for people to realize that the police

script. The weather portrayed is bright and sunny, which enforces the positive, upbeat mood intended. Additionally, there are lots of green trees and neutral tones that make the video relaxing to watch and paints the comforting, ideal setting to live in. Meanwhile, contrasting campaign videos in the U.S. commonly have dark, stormy weather and dystopian towns and warzones to convey their view of police. For example, the police department in Doraville, Georgia, released a police recruitment video portraying officers in tanks with copious amounts of artillery, all set to death metal music. This is ineffective because it promotes a never-ending cycle of violence rather than the goal of abolishing it. It also leaves the audience feeling depressed or resigned to continue that cycle, which will not help the difficult social position American

officers are in. New Zealand also put thought into its scripts, sharing information about the program and directly giving a call to action to viewers about why they need them if they exhibit the qualities to be an officer. For example, you can choose between “30 different careers,” and they want “New Zealanders who are willing to train and learn.” There is nothing emphasizing fighting violence, but rather how to be an upstanding citizen and using humor to interact with citizens that further that community bond.

I found New Zealand’s police recruitment video convincing and effective, but I believe it could have added some contrasting elements to strengthen its argument. For example, it could have shown crime rates in different countries and clips from police recruitment campaigns as evidence for the claim that a peaceful, community-oriented approach to policing is more effective. The crew could have also made a parody of typical recruitment videos from the U.S.

before switching it into its current one. That option would have been both jarring and memorable. By addressing the different ways countries promote their police forces, it highlights the key differences in the types of people recruited.

However, the video is quite effective as it is. It went viral a few years ago during the peak of protests against police brutality. It gained a lot of attention from U.S. viewers, especially on the methods that police departments here should consider when recruiting and training. It was surprising for me as well. As long as I can remember, I have had mostly good experiences with officers in my childhood who attended community events and spoke at our schools. Still, I was always frightened when I saw an officer. Even when I drive by one while going the speed limit, there is a sharp pang of fear in my heart. That is something that needs to be changed. The only people who should be feeling that fear are the ones who have broken the law—not people peacefully protesting their

rights or people trying to file lawsuits and claims. People should not fear mistreatment from police or be afraid to go to police for help. We should not have to warn our children away from police or tell them that their skin color makes them a target. While the U.S. is a much larger place than New Zealand, changing the ways we campaign and who we recruit will make an immense difference in cracking down on the “bad cops.”

The police departments are to blame for promoting violence, but so are we for allowing distrust between cops and citizens. If we do not question why law enforcement videos portray militarism, how can we enact change? We can speak out against those who abuse their power and raise the youth in our communities to have faith in police. If we choose to pursue a career in this field, we can change the game rather than joining the cycle. It takes everyone to end the distrust, but together we can have a more peaceful world. Do you care enough to spread peace?

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Solenn Vincent is a first-year student at the University of Iowa from Chandler, Arizona, studying English and creative writing on the publishing track with minors in French and media management. She previously served as the editor-in-chief of *Ink Lit*, a literary magazine for first-years, and is now an honors outreach ambassador. Vincent plans on going into publishing, book writing, and publicity upon her graduation.

analyzing female characters in austen and dickens

Featured Honors Student: Abigail Adams

Edited by: Josie Boyle



Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams wrote this essay for Selected British Authors before 1900: Jane Austen and Charles Dickens with professor Jonathan Wilcox. She was inspired by the modern literature internet phenomenon of characters “written by a woman.” Adams wanted to analyze how Austen and Dickens, although they were writing around the same time, differed in portraying their female characters and their varying degrees of femininity. Both authors asked the societal question of what should be considered the “ideal” Victorian woman. She found that Austen’s heroines function as individuals better, allowed to have more of an identity beyond that of sex and marriage. Dickens women functioned more as side characters and are always inevitably tied to a male character.

In Jane Austen’s fourth-published novel, *Emma*, the titular character proclaims, “It is always incomprehensible to a man that a woman should ever refuse an offer of marriage. A man always imagines a woman to be ready for anybody who asks her” (73). In Jane Austen and Charles Dickens’ 19th century England, women’s primary role was still that of the homemaker. The novels of both Austen and Dickens portray a wide cast of female characters, each possessing varying degrees of femininity traditional to the time, as both authors ask the societal question

of what should be considered the “ideal” Victorian woman.

Feminine beauty is an integral part of the marriage mart described in the novels of both Jane Austen and Charles Dickens. Austen draws attention to Victorian society’s obsession with beauty through the dialogue of the rather shallow Mrs. Bennet.

On multiple occasions, Mrs. Bennet ranks the beauty of her own daughters, claiming that Elizabeth “is not half so handsome as Jane” and as such will be less likely to receive a marriage proposal from Mr. Bingley (Austen 2). She

is also particularly critical of other women in the town, dismissing the Lucas girls chance of securing a good match since they are “not handsome” and Charlotte Lucas is particularly “plain” (Austen 40).

Similarly, Charles Dickens pokes fun at the standards of the upper class, as *Great Expectations* describes Pip’s plight with the frivolity of having wealth, his quick betrayal of the kind Joe: “how common Estella would consider Joe, a mere blacksmith: how thick his boots, and how coarse his hands” (Dickens 72), and yet Pip remains loyal to Estella and her beauty even

after he falls from wealth.

Although Austen's main characters in *Pride and Prejudice* are described as being beautiful or handsome, these are not their only positive character traits. Notably, Elizabeth Bennet is not deemed to be initially very beautiful by her eventual love interest, Mr. Darcy, and he is seen to grow more and more attracted to her as he witnesses her other traits of wit, humor, and charm. Dickens' *Great Expectations* sees a similar portrayal of the marriage mart in Pip's obsession with the beautiful Estella. Although Estella is found to be cold-hearted and "insulting," Pip continues to believe himself steadfastly in love with her, and, despite her abuse, acknowledges that he is "not sure that [he] shouldn't like to see her again" because of how pretty she is (Dickens 61).

Mr. Darcy, while initially "prejudiced" and interested in physical attractiveness, is made to eat his words: "[N]o sooner had he made it clear to himself and his friends that she had hardly a good feature in her face, than he began to find it was rendered uncommonly intelligent by the beautiful expression of her dark eyes...in spite of his asserting that her manners were not those of the fashionable world, he was caught by their easy playfulness" (Austen 20). Austen has Darcy rethink his misguided judgment and fall in love with Elizabeth

despite and for traits in addition to her physical appearance.

Marriage is an important plot device for both Dickens and Austen, particularly in *Our Mutual Friend*, and *Persuasion*, and although one cannot deny that Austen spends significantly more time on marriages than Dickens does in his plots, Austen's females are given more agency beyond just being married off. Elizabeth Bennet is particularly unique in her displays of free will in that she refuses Mr. Collins and Mr. Darcy's proposals. She also has character traits and interests beyond that of falling in love. She reads, enjoys going on walks, and has a rich and tender relationship with her sister Jane. While Austen doesn't shy away from punishing her more unlikable female characters with loveless marriages in other novels, many of her female characters—notably Elizabeth Bennet—are afforded much more depth.

Unlike Austen, nearly all of Dickens' women's main arc is about which man they marry. Bidly, a kind and sweet soul, is unable to find a "happy ending" until she is loved by a man and, unable to capture Pip's attention, is married to Joe. Estella is punished with a marriage to Bentley Drummle, who is abusive and referred to as the "spider" (Dickens 212). Even after Drummle's death, Dickens teases the idea Estella may yet enter a re-

lationship with Pip. Lizzie Hexam is pursued by multiple men, neither of whom she seems to particularly like. Large plot elements of *Our Mutual Friend* are tied to Bella Wilfer being made to change her ways to be deserving of a marriage with John Harmon. Even Jenny Wren, who does at least have employment and a female friend in Lizzie, is supposedly married off to Sloppy despite claiming she would torture any husband of hers. Excluding the painfully unmarried Miss Havisham, Dickens seems to be uniquely obsessed with marrying off all of his female characters to tie off their plot threads.

Dickens offers female characters a decent amount of page time, and many of them are integral to the plot development of his novels. However, it is hard to deny that Dickens writes with a strong male gaze and one that is more firmly rooted in the rather sexist ideals for women in the high Victorian period of his writings.

Jane Austen's writing, narrative style, and role as a female author allow her female characters to benefit from more fleshed-out personalities. Her women seem more able to choose to be tied to a male character, whereas Dickensian women are unfortunately dull in comparison, feeding into his idea that the "ideal" Victorian woman seemingly must always be "Wife of the Above" (Dickens 3).

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Abigail Adams is an English and creative writing major with minors in news and media literacy and business administration. She wrote this piece during her second year.

choosing to grow: a commencement address

Featured Honors Student: David Roth
Edited by: Alex Lumish



David Roth

All his life, David Roth has lived by the mantra “Bloom where you’re planted.” So, when he was selected as the University of Iowa’s December 2023 graduation commencement speaker, he knew that he wanted to reflect this message in his speech. His speech reflects upon his employment at the local gas station Casey’s and how this experience shaped his confidence. He dives into how choices and decisions shape our experience as people, and how even small choices, like those he made during his time at Casey’s, can change our lives for the better.

The best thing that has ever happened to me was getting employed at Casey’s—a local gas station in my hometown in rural Iowa. And I never imagined I would be saying this, especially given how it started.

On my very first day behind the register, a man approached me and tossed some stuff on the counter. But as I checked out his items, I froze.

Anxiety took over. I didn’t greet him, I avoided eye contact, and, when finished, mustered to mumble a meek ‘have a good one.’

And he rightly told me words that have stuck with me to this day: “You can treat us like people, you know?” Yeah.

Yeah that one stung. But the

worst part is that he was completely right.

I’ve always struggled with social anxiety, and to that man I was robotic and borderline rude, and he rightly called me out. Everyone in line behind him stared at my red, flustered face. I went home, cried, and woke up the next day dreading work. But I knew that morning that I faced a big decision: flee or grow.

At Iowa, we’ve all faced the choice to step back or step up. From hesitating to ask a question in a crowded lecture to tackling tough conversations with friends, we’ve all been there. And my situation at Casey’s was no different. But, in that moment, I dug in my heels and chose to grow—big time.

I read books about social interactions. I studied dialogue trees. I literally reviewed films with my coworkers. I would ask them: “Did that ‘have a good one’ sound authentic?” and get feedback.

I was down bad, and it was a grind. But fortunately, I ever so slowly got better. Eventually, every pizza made and every “have a good one” uttered, transformed from a phobia into an opportunity to connect and to make someone’s day a little brighter. Thus, I underwent the greatest personal transformation of my life. And look at me now!

Notice that that story’s outcome hinged on a choice. And that tough, crucial choice was to embrace



David Roth addresses his fellow graduates. Photo by Tim Schoon.

growth in the face of fear. This is what I call blooming where you're planted.

Throughout our Iowa journey, we've all encountered these defining decisions. For me, a big one was deciding between returning to a comfortable internship in Iowa or traveling to Chile in South America for a research program, despite only speaking English. And, after much, much deliberation, I took the leap and chose Chile.

Now, did I learn the language? Well, as they say in Spanish, "No," but my new surroundings and how

I reacted to them taught me more about myself than any language ever could, and thus I bloomed. And it's been these tough, growth-driven choices that have defined our experience at Iowa and will continue to for the rest of our lives.

Now, as we stand here, about to graduate, we're all about to be transplanted. Some of us will venture across the country, some across the globe, and others will stay here within lovely Iowa City. And just like at Casey's, we all have a choice. We can let our new environments shape us, or we can

shape them ourselves.

Our experiences are far more than the mere happenings of life; they are the canvas on which we paint our responses, our resilience, and our resolve. As we embark on diverse paths, each of us carries the brush to paint our future. So, as you step into the world, ask yourself: How will I bloom where I'm planted?

Class of 2023, genuinely, congrats on everything you've accomplished. It was a long climb, but we made it. Thank you all, and, of course, have a good one!

David Roth graduated with University Honors in December 2023 with majors in mathematics and actuarial science. As an honors student, he served as an honors outreach ambassador and undergraduate teaching assistant as well as a tutor. He is currently earning a graduate degree in data science.

meet the team

honors student writers and editors



Holly Blosser Yoder

As honors advising director, Holly supervises the honors peer mentors and also serves as the advisor to Honors Publications. In this role, she works with the student editors and writers who produce the Honors Newsletter, Alumni Connection and many articles on the Honors Program blog.



Hannah Cargo

Hannah is a third-year student from the Dallas–Forth Worth area in Texas. She’s majoring in creative writing and environmental planning. Hannah hopes to make the world a better place (and maybe have some fun while doing it).



Josephine Geiger-Lee

Josephine Geiger-Lee is majoring in English and creative writing as well as journalism and mass communication and is pursuing a certificate in event management. She is in her third year at the University of Iowa.



Colin Votzmeyer

Colin Votzmeyer is a third-year honors student from Mt. Prospect, Illinois, studying journalism and mass communication. He intends on attending a law school in the Midwest upon graduation and pursuing a career in criminal defense law.



Kate Anderson

Kate Andersen is a second-year student from Eldridge, Iowa. She is studying English, with a goal of pursuing a degree in English secondary education and becoming a high school teacher after graduation.



Josie Boyle

Josie Boyle is a first-year student from Peosta, Iowa, studying English on the publishing track and communications studies. Upon graduation, she will attend graduate school with hopes to become an editor and post-secondary educator.



Riley Dunn

Riley Dunn is a first-year student from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania majoring in English and creative writing on the publishing track, as well as journalism and mass communication. She is enjoying her time at the University of Iowa so far and hopes to continue to improve her writing. In her free time, she loves reading, writing, swimming, and traveling to new and exciting places.



Alex Lumish

Alexandra (Alex) Lumish is a first-year student from the Bay Area, California. She is majoring in English and creative writing. In her time at the University of Iowa, Alex hopes to develop her nonfiction, and journalistic writing skills, in order to become a more well-rounded writer.



Raezel Valencia

Raezel Valencia is a third-year student from Eldersburg, Maryland, studying English and creative writing on the publishing track. She loves both reading and writing, and came to the University of Iowa in the hopes of polishing her writing skills as well as her publishing skills. She is eager to try her skills and work as an editor or a book designer for her love of the book-making process.



Nadia Shaaban

Nadia Shaaban is a first-year honors student from South Barrington, Illinois, studying English and creative writing. She hopes to attend graduate school upon graduation and pursue a career in either children's writing or screenwriting for television.

call for artists and writers

spring 2025



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