



October 9, 2024

Mr. Michael Singh, T22165
RJ Donovan Correctional Facility, A4-126
480 Alta Road
San Diego, CA 92179

Dear Mr. Singh,

Congratulations on your acceptance to the Foundations in the Humanities correspondence program, offered by the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center at UC Santa Barbara. We have included the first assignment for the Foundations I course. Please review the course requirements in the information sheet and complete the pre-course survey. As per the requirements, send in the survey and your first assignment within one week of receiving it to ensure your spot in the course. If we do not receive these materials by November 11, 2024, we will assume you are not interested in participating and will send you no further assignments.

Sincerely,

Susan Derwin

Susan Derwin, Director
Foundations in the Humanities
Interdisciplinary Humanities Center
University of California, Santa Barbara

read
10/15/24

- The kind of story = The good ole days
- it was a good time in his life & what wasn't good, was dealt with good
- poetic language that tell us about the speaker now



Foundations in the Humanities I

**A correspondence course offered by the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center
University of California, Santa Barbara**

“Foundations I: Introduction to Literary Studies” is the first course of the Foundations in the Humanities program. The goal of this correspondence course is to introduce students to works of literature. Each reading presents situations in which fictional characters confront and respond to significant life situations and challenges of universal relevance. Reading and responding to questions about these literary works enables participants to expand their insight into themselves and their society, for the purpose of building better lives in prison and after their release.

This course consists of six units. The content of each unit is a poem, short story, excerpt from a novel, or an essay, and a worksheet with questions about the reading. The completion of each unit requires reading the text, answering each question in paragraph form, and returning the worksheet to the Interdisciplinary Humanities Center at UC Santa Barbara, where it is read and evaluated by a university instructor. The worksheet and evaluation are then returned, so that students may keep their work and the instructor’s feedback as a permanent record of their participation.

Answers to assignment questions must each be at least 200 words. Participants are expected to return their answers within one week of receiving each packet of materials. We understand that there are delays in the mail. We request that participants complete and mail each assignment within a week of receiving it.

The program does not offer college credit. Participants do, however, receive a certificate of completion attesting to the fact that they are actively pursuing an academic program.

Sincerely,

Susan Derwin, Director
Foundations in the Humanities
Interdisciplinary Humanities Center
University of California, Santa Barbara

Singh, Michael T-22165
Manjeet

Questions:

1. The first line of the poem mentions Mercury. Mercury is the Roman god of travelers and messengers. He is depicted as wearing sandals with wings on the heel-straps that let him fly with arrow-like speed and make fast getaways. What connections and associations is the speaker establishing between the basketball players and the Roman god, or larger than life figures more generally? What other words, phrases and images build upon the traits associated with Mercury?
2. Describe the environment, people, and situations on and around the basketball court. Is this an indoor or outdoor court, and what do we know about the condition of the court? Who are the spectators? Who or what else is present on the sidelines? What do we learn about this neighborhood and the game through these details?
3. The language of the poem does two things, it paints a picture of the game, and it makes the reader feel what it's like to be a part of the game--the momentum, the players' moves, the interaction among the players. Give three examples of words or phrases that draw you into the game and discuss what each of them evokes in you. Then, consider the form of the poem itself, including the length of the individual lines (long or short?) and the layout of the words on the page. Attempt to connect these formal elements with aspects of the game being depicted.
I
II
4. How do you interpret the poem's last phrase: "we knew we were Beautiful & dangerous"?
5. There are references to activities and objects in the poem that have nothing to do with basketball. Identify three of these elements and discuss how they contribute to the meaning of the poem.
6. Notice that the speaker is writing about an earlier time in his life. What kind of story is he telling himself and others as he looks back and reflects? Was it a good time in his life? A bad time? Why? What aspects of the poetic language tell us something about who the speaker is now, as he writes the poem?

Mail your answers to:

Foundations in the Humanities Program
Interdisciplinary Humanities Center
6046 HSSB, UC Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA 93106-7100

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1/5

Singh, M. T-22165

Q1 = The connections & associations the speaker is establishing between ^{the} basketball players & the Roman God, or larger than life figures more generally are a few. Between basketball players & the Roman God Mercury - the sandals with wings can be a metaphor for basketball shoes with the Michael Jordan jump-man figure on it. To fly with speed seems to demonstrate a basketball player jumping towards the rim to slam dunk the ball into the hoop. One must fly with speed like God to conquer the game. Larger than life figures like Michael Jordan flew from the courts free-throw line to the rim slam dunking the ball. Jordans shoes had small wings on the sides of each shoe. Jordan is like a Roman God in a basketball world. Jordan traveled in the air to the rim with great speed akin to Mercury flying with arrow like speed. The Roman God's ability to 'make fast getaways' is metaphoric of Jordan's ability to evade defenders attempting to stop him from scoring. Mercury's insignia of wings are like the wings on Jordan's shoes. Jordan's defender evading moves were most often converted into points by way of fast breaks or layups. Another Mercury 'larger than life figure' is a Phoenix Mercury player named Kaitlyn Clark. She scores a multitude of points. When players score a lot, they are said to have "gotten hot" akin to Mercury's temperature portrayals. Travelers in the NBA league most often receive the "traveling" whistle/call during a fast-break or layup attempt. This occurs as a player will cease to dribble the ball & continue movement, hence - "traveling". Michael Jordan is a basketball God. He became one by fast breaks & layups. This God had wings on the side of his shoes. His traveling was to fly into being a larger than life figure. Now everyone wants "to be like Mike". A Gatorade commercial that showed his skill & persona. The jingle was 'I WANNA be like Mike.'

Q2= Environment, people, & situations create an aura of personalities on the outdoor, concrete basketball court. One must be careful to not look foolish by the competition playing against you. Off of and surrounding the basketball court are girls & kids who wish they could play. All of the guys from the neighborhood play everyday. These guys were All-American stars in High School. Due to injury and/or low grades, they weren't good enough for college.

A chain link fence surrounds the basketball court. The ten (10) guys playing are all part of the same neighborhood, "hood". With no jobs, NO TRAINING in a vocational skill the players sell dope. This is done thru the chain link fence. When a customer shows up, the game momentarily ceases so one of the players can make the sale.

The concrete basketball court can make you look good or silly. First, there's so many cracks in the cement that if you dribble the ball on it, it can bounce astray. Remember that girls are watching! If you look great playing, you might 'pull' a girl that is not your baby's Mama.

All these guys know is hoops. We all grew up ballin' in the park, got so good, then became God-like in High School. Everyone knew and loved me. I was on top of the world. Then one day in a big game I only needed two more points for a triple-double, 10 points, 10 rebounds, 10 assists. I drove to the basket, the second I spun & moved, it was over. My a/c (knee) snapped.

The real game is the one in our heads. We all want to look good, chase skirts & get the girls. You can't look foolish, it drives down your value. We must play inside the fence & make money to live. Watch out for the crack. Both of them. The one on the court & the one you sell. If you go for a triple-double, it is over.

Foundations in The Humanities

Q3- It feels so good to be in the moment. In a game, wearing Jordans (shoes), Silky team uniform jersey. Nothing but a hot, Swish of strings like silk, right after I shoot the ball. We were metaphysical when girls, Cheered on the sidelines, cause all of us played hard to look good. We had moves we didn't know, we had, cause we simply did ~~create~~ ^{what came natural.} ~~moves~~.

I used to practice my jump shot by shooting two hundred times a day. After awhile, I'd make more & more out of two hundred. Then in games when I would shoot the ball, one could hear the magic sound, 'Nothing but a hot, Swish of strings like silk.' Then the audience cheered. When I turned around to run back and play defense, I had a lot of energy. It came from the cheering audience.

As one waited for their turn at pregame layups, we'd look around in the stands. We'd pick out who each of us thought "was kella fine." During the game,² We were metaphysical when girls, Cheered on the side lines. When there was a pretty girl watching, you better do a good move & score! Cause if you don't, she's going to be with the one who did. That made us play so very hard.

Back in the day,³ We had moves we didn't know, we had. When you're young & dumb, you take chances doing moves you never thought you could do. If you score, you practice that same move over & over. Jump, spin, finger-roll. It becomes your move. You didn't know you had it in you. You challenged, you rose & you conquered.

When you score, it feels awesome because your shot made the net swish. You did it! If you did well, it's easier to talk to the girl, cause you know you looked as good on the court as she is pretty. Being young & feeling good gave you a confidence to achieve things you didn't think you could do. It feels good to succeed, even if it's only one basket.

Foundations
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Q4= The twin attributes of being young, "Beautiful & dangerous." So many of us see that as I & you grew up - a person in their prime. A guy so handsome or girl so beautiful no matter what anyone says! When I was young, so was the basketball court, so was Michael Jordan & so was his "Jordan's" shoes. The ~~lense~~^{lense} that one sees life, & the game of "hoops" through is power & skill. You show it to beautiful girls in the audience.

Everyone has their perception of beauty. At a younger age, beauty is on the surface. As one ages, one realizes that beauty grows from the inside; then is expressed outwardly. Basketball has beautiful moves by people with beautiful exuberance of youth. What beautiful is, is an open expression & willingness to express what is inside of you. You 'look' good! Your game is good! It is beautiful!

Dangerous is the skill you've built over time. Steph Curry scoring rune (9) three pointers in the Olympic Gold medal game all stems from his 'dangerous' skill. When you're playing, dangerous is the player who scores, at will at the most needed time. Danger is the belief that you're a LeBron James. The belief of being a 'danger' to the other team's chance of winning while doing it over a sustained period is dangerous.

Put beauty & dangerous together, then you have a full confidence in self - a real beauty & a real 'dangerous' game that can help will your team to a win. It is also the form of a finger roll into the basket. You take a chance, with full faith you will succeed. You have ripped muscles. You have correct form. You are good when it counts and the game is still undecided. You win!

As I age, I see how beautiful & dangerous my abilities were. I looked good! By good I mean handsome. I was dangerous and could score when, needed most of the time. I got to express the real me - whether I felt good or bad inside. Basketball helped me, beautiful & dangerously, get out the hurt & pain in life. It's also the only time I ever felt beautiful. It's the only time I felt so good at something, that my game was a danger - to the other team.

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5. There's references to activities/objects in the poem that have nothing to do w basketball. Identify 3 elements & discuss how they contributed to the meaning of the poem.

Singh, M. T-22165

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Q5 - In "Slam, Dunk & Hook" (1991) the three activities that draw my attention are "When Sonny Boy's mama died", "We were metaphysical when girls" and "The skullcap of hope & good." They contribute to the meaning of the poem in significant ways. Issues discussed are death, girls & hope/goodness. These are major themes of life from birth to death.

The line "When Sonny Boy's mama died" adds how basketball is an outlet that is positive for us during a time of grief. "Sonny Boy" took all his grief and "He played nonstop all day, so hard." Every play - dribble, shot & rebound was most assuredly played with great energy & emotion. This is an acceptable outlet for grief. Most often all the guys know about your loss. They offer support by playing with him all day & offer good words.

Most all guys like showing off & looking good in front of girls. When a girl walks past a basketball court, guys posture themselves if slouching, start playing aggressive defense, taking extra shot & even dribbling through their legs. We all want the girls to cheer for us & say good things & yelling our names. Boy does that sound great, make you feel good and play hard.

Hope and good are the twins of personal happiness. When you are playing the game and are pretty good at it, it becomes an esteem booster. When a player is "in the zone" hitting all their shots, making great plays and is dominating the game, it is a very memorable day. This "in the zone" great day is something you hold dear to your heart and tell stories about. This all fosters personal happiness. This stays with you forever.

The meaning of the poem grew within my mind when I read the three quotes & reassessed what quotes carry sentiment. When I could relate, it made me pay more attention to the poem. Basketball is great and a positive outlet that creates happy memories. I still remember at 49 great plays I made, when the gym was dedicated to a friend when he was killed and gave me hope & goodness when I'd be down. Making a basket is more than a game.

Q6=

A new way to say, 'The Good Ole Days' is now 'Back In The Day'. Either way you look at it, this is the story of the poem, better days. Young and in prime shape, which is used for sports, to have a good time in life with friends playing a game you love. Further poetic language tells us the speaker has aged past his prime days as there's a past tense pattern, 'Last forever, poised in midair', 'We'd corkscrew up & dunk balls', & 'We were metaphysical when girls cheered'.

Life is beautiful when you are young. You are fit and can do active events like play sports. You have the energy of a youthful bravado. You look good, dress good and feel good. Things like going out is fun, going out to eat with friends and even mischievous fun like sneaking into the movie theater, smoking illegal weed or going to see a girl.

Then there's the fun times on the basketball court. Playing games back to back, in the sun then being so thirsty that water tastes like a smoothie. The guys, all of us have a rapport with each other. As you dribble to the hoop, you tell your buddy whose guarding you that after he went to sleep last night, you went to his place to see his... Mom! Then you drive to the hoop & score!

The aspects of the poetic language utilizing past tense words to illustrate history of past days. 'We'd Last forever, poised in midair' talks of being young enough to jump so high you last in the air forever. 'We'd corkscrew up & dunk balls' is of when you were so strong you can spin in the air before you dunk. The great motivational moments of when 'We were metaphysical when girls cheered' being a moment to shine even more to the sound of girls cheering for your dazzling moves.

As is shown the poem's words articulates the fountain of youth time & physical peak fitness. To have fun while playing a game called basketball. To do it so much, that you've got plenty of stories to tell when you have aged. The good, earlier times of young life told from an aged man's perspective.