

# THE INKWELL QUARTERLY

## Lessons from Annie Ernaux, 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature Winner

By Alexis Charowsky

On December 7th, 2022, the Nobel Prize awards ceremony was held at Konserthuset Stockholm. There are five prizes that are awarded annually to individuals with high achievements in the areas of Chemistry, Physics, Literature, Peace, and Physiology. This year, the Nobel Prize in Literature was awarded to the French writer Annie Ernaux. In the press release for this event, it was stated Ernaux received this award “for the courage and clinical acuity with which she uncovers the roots, estrangements and collective restraints of personal memory.”

Before Ernaux’s winning of the Nobel Prize, I had not heard about her. I wanted to learn more about her background and what caused her to start writing in the first place. I found that Ernaux’s writing career consisted of stories about her own life and important events that occurred throughout history. Growing up in France in the early 1940’s, she published a narrative titled *Les Années (The Years)* that focused on living there after WWII. This was said to be considered her magnum opus. After researching more about Ernaux’s literary career, I wondered how the Nobel selections work and how Ernaux was chosen to be the winner. On the Nobel Prize’s website, I found that they had an entire section dedicated to the procedures selectors have to go through in order to pick a winner.

The process of selecting who wins this title is complicated. In order for an author to be considered a candidate for the Nobel Prize, the Nobel Committee for Literature has to send an invite to qualified nominators who are able to suggest a person that they find worthy enough to fit this role. Invitations are sent out in September to over hundreds of different nominators. By January 31st of the next year, nominators’ submissions have to be turned in, and by April the Nobel Committee will have a first round of about 15 to 20 candidates that they will then take into consideration. This list of people is decreased to only five final candidates in May. Throughout the summer months, the committee has the job of reviewing the works each nominee has created and of taking notes on what they favored and/or disliked about the pieces. In early September, all of the committee members

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# Finally, a Normal Spring Semester

By Emily Cherkauskas



I am a senior University student, about to graduate after four years at Wilkes. I'm in my eighth and last semester. Since I've been a college student, this is my first normal spring semester.

By "normal," I mean normal, as in not worrying about the perpetual doom of yet another shutdown blocking away all physical contact and presence with each other.

As I began this semester, things felt weird, and I wasn't the only one who felt that way. No longer were we talking about COVID every single day, every single class. We were just going along with our syllabi and assignments.

Here and there, a student would test positive and be back within the week or so like nothing happened. No longer though did that student have to announce themselves to a multitude of individuals that they potentially had infected others with a dangerous respiratory virus. Now, you quarantine for a couple of days and wear a mask. Then it's back to normal. No longer are you out for two weeks at the

bare minimum. Normal is a strange word here, because are we truly back to normal? The collective trauma and anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic still lingers, spiritually and physically. In some spots you can still find social distancing stickers and mask dispensers. Heck, I even just bought a pack of 100 masks a few weeks ago, because I felt weird after realizing the supply my family had had finally depleted. When something happens for three years with seemingly no end, it's hard to readjust yourself to how life used to be.

I've changed a lot in those times, too. Like I said, I'm now in my senior year. In my first semester, in the fall of 2019, I had a sincere innocent perspective of college, quite literally only taking 101-level classes and gen eds. In January 2020, though, weird things started to come about regarding a strange virus over in China.

Luckily, I had decided to take environmental science that spring semester, so our professor was giving us an update every class about this airborne illness. Eventually, discussion came to the entire University, with rumors and fears of shutdowns that would soon one day reach us.

And they did.

For some, it was a dream, and for others, it was a nightmare. I got the taste of both worlds, with myself stuck at home attending Zoom University, while my parents faced the pandemic in their essential worker positions. Even when we came back in person after several months, the anxiety was still there, perhaps at its worst in the initial days, where we did not grasp the severity of the virus. When we came back, the threat was right in front of us. Two years ago, the University emphasized the virus' power in threatening to close the institution due to a rise in COVID positives. Last year, the Wilkes showed that they can certainly do that, beginning the spring semester entirely virtual for an entire two weeks—quite the haunting and dystopian callback to the initial "15 days to stop the spread" mantra. The distorted sense of pandemic collectivism and isolation altered our own means of communication and socialization, potentially for decades, at the very least. As a senior college student, the change in behavior is especially obvious in the underclassmen. College was always advertised as not just an educational growth opportunity, but as an extra four or so years of escape before entering the real world of the workplace. How, exactly, can we acknowledge college as an escape when a very real threat has been present around us for the past three years?

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Where am I going with this reflection? I've realized that the current juniors, sophomores, and first-year students haven't experienced pre-pandemic academic life. I admit, my experience with it was very limited, but I feel the need to share some advice on how to adjust to university life, because those first few months are certainly core memories regardless.

Firstly, don't be afraid to step out of your comfort zone.

College is a time to grow and develop not just your education and professional skills, but also yourself. Take some time to go to a lecture or seminar, or to an event hosted by a club outside of your department, or one hosted by the mega councils. Even if it's just one, getting a slice of that life outside of your classes will remind you to decompress and learn some new stuff.

Second, do what you want.

Because of the shutdowns, I ended up having a lot of time to focus on myself. I learned more about my own interests and priorities. It was a spur of the moment when I declared my English double major, because why not? The workload has been a lot, but I don't regret it. I've been able to take so many interesting and fulfilling classes that renewed my love for literature and writing, after my not-as-good-quality high school English classes seemingly made me forget that passion. Even this English department's ENG 101 and 120 classes offer a sense of newfound creativity and destination for research and writing, and it only grows more with the upper-level classes.

If I did not demonstrate it enough already, it's important to realize that time flies. Which brings me to my final point for you:

Take one day at a time.

Yes, challenge yourself and follow your passions, but remember that you are a human who can only do so much in a day. Create realistic boundaries for yourself and your schedule. If you put too much on your plate, you will (not might—you will) become burnt out like a firework dud. Believe me, I've learned that the hard way. Not only did it cost me my mental health, but my physical health, too.

Don't get yourself caught up in the arms race to get all your work done within four years. Of course, it's hypocritical for me to say this as someone graduating in the "standard" four years, but I would be even more horrible if I did not address it. Everyone faces a variety of obstacles, internal and external, and it plays a role in their academic performance and student livelihood.

I have met people who have tried to graduate with two degrees and a minor or two in three years. Meanwhile, I know people who have taken five or six years to graduate with just one major, nothing more. I've also contemplated the possibility of staying an extra semester or two when I was still window-shopping potential secondary majors and a minor. Both timelines have their pros and cons, and it is all up to the individual themselves to work on what timeline is best for them.

I'm bringing this last point up to encourage empathy among students and faculty. Nothing is a competition in the game of education. All in all, do what works for you. If you're a senior or first-year student (or even a visitor or an alum) reading this, I want to emphasize this message to you: I, along with the entire Wilkes community, am proud of you.



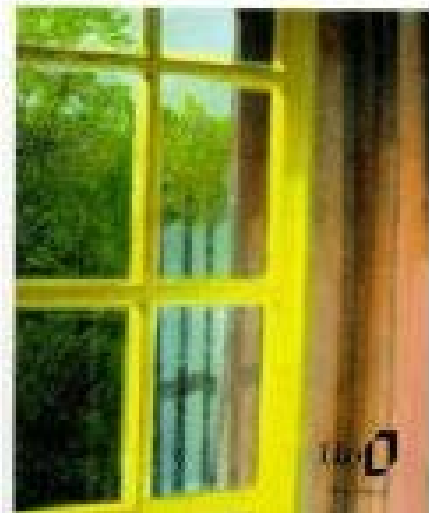
# Lessons from Annie Ernaux, 2022 Nobel Prize in Literature Winner

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meet with one another to discuss what they have observed about the final five candidates. The applicant with the most votes is to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, which is announced in October, and the award ceremony follows in December.

On the night of the awards ceremony, Ernaux presented a beautiful speech that brought light to her idea of what literature means to her. She focused on how in her younger years she would often see people face social injustices and took on the activity of writing books in order to speak upon these discriminations. Ernaux remembered that she was always reading from a young age, which had an impact on her decision to continue learning more about literary studies. Before becoming a well-known writer, she attended college at the Universities of Rouen and Bordeaux, receiving her degree in literature and eventually working as a teacher. Her writing career started in 1974 with her first book *Les armoires vides* (*Cleaned Out*), which is an autobiography of her life growing up in France and how things had begun to change as she reached adulthood. In her speech, she mentioned that this narrative was used to talk about a female's body and the stages it goes through while also engaging in the fact that a woman's existence is often defined by males in society. Ernaux states that "finding the words that contain both reality and the sensation provided by reality would become, and remain to this day, my ongoing concern in writing, no matter what the subject," focusing not only on the struggles she faced while growing up, but also speaking upon what others have experienced as well in her writing.

Annie Ernaux  
*Les armoires vides*



Accessed from <https://www.cultra.com/>

Annie Ernaux  
*Les années*



Accessed from <https://www.decitre.fr/>

Annie Ernaux Marc Marie  
*L'usage de la photo*

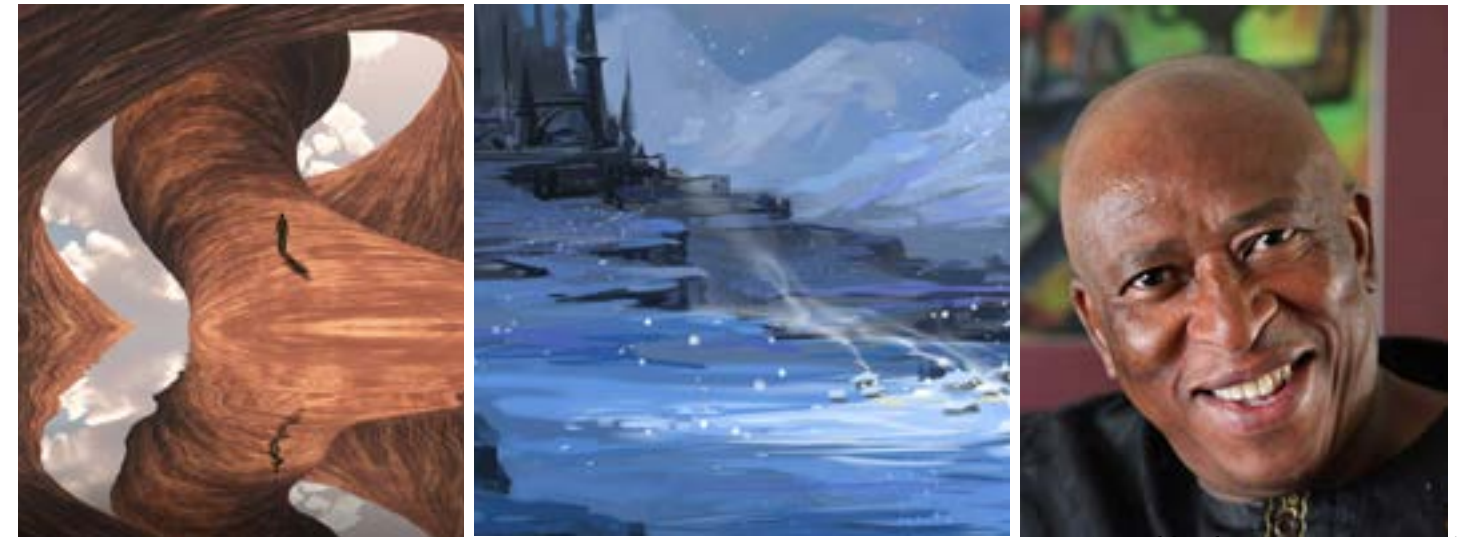


Accessed from <https://www.goodreads.com/>

As Ernaux continued her speech, she brought up the idea of the word "I" often found in her books. Although this is referred to as the first person, Ernaux wanted to push past the typical standards of "I" meaning the "author's experience" and broaden the understanding of "I" to capture the experiences of "all individuals" who might be reading her narratives. She wanted readers to feel some sort of comfort in knowing that similar encounters have happened to others and that they are not alone in any struggles they might face. For those who were unable to have their voices heard, Ernaux said she used her books to enlighten those of society of injustices happening that were often not discussed enough. She concluded her speech by speaking to those who

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## Prompting Pen to Paper



The English Department had the honor of hosting and hearing from Dr. Zakes Mda, a South African and American-African Appalachian writer, painter, and music composer. He spoke with our Victorian Literature students to discuss his experience in familial and communal storytelling, how he grew up with the practice of improvising a story, and the importance of narrative voice within historical contexts. While he explained a great many things, one notion that he shared concerning the beginning of a story really struck a chord. He said that many of his stories have begun from being within a place, and thinking it was either so beautiful, or so ugly, that it deserved a story. Perhaps, you could try a similar method for beginning your own narrative! Try starting a story with one--or both--of the pictures above as your starting point!

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have power, noting that more often than not, this power is used to disadvantage those looked to be lower in the hierarchy of class, race, and gender. She claimed that "to decipher the real world by stripping it of the visions and values that language, all language, carries within it is to upend its established order, upset its hierarchies." By discussing these different issues in her work, Ernaux is able to have those who faced discriminations from lower hierarchies have their voices heard. In winning the Nobel Prize, Ernaux said that she did not want it to be looked at as a "victory" but instead wants to share this pride with those who "hope for greater freedom, equality and dignity for all humans, regardless of their sex or gender, the color of their skin, and their culture." She said it was her one desire to have voices be heard and changes be made, and in ending her speech she affirmed that she will continue using literature as a way to revolt against and change the hardships placed among people in society today.

I think that overall Ernaux presented an insightful speech. In the beginning of her speech she mentioned that she did not start her literary career for herself, but instead to "avenge her people" as she was "an inferior race for all eternity." Many of the problems written in her narratives focus on social injustices that people face due to the social class they were born into. Ernaux wanted to push away from these standards and not base one's ability to succeed in the world class on their class. She did a great job at putting these individuals before herself and speaking upon injustices that need to be addressed. After learning more about Annie Ernaux and the many works she has published, I want to begin reading some of her works. One piece of hers that really interests me is titled *L'usage de la photo*, which includes the different experiences she faced while living with breast cancer.



# The Impact of Chat GPT

By Bailey DeJesus

With technology growing exponentially and infiltrating every aspect of our lives, it really comes as no surprise that there are now computer systems that can write conventional, worthy papers for students. This power to be able to create entire essays, lectures, and content from a computer system is a great step for the technology, but a negative setback for writers and creators. English and Liberal Arts majors who are required to write and create their own individual content now have a new avenue to cheat. They can input basic ideas into a system that spits out full papers in minutes. In doing so, students and creators lose the ability to learn from their own writing process and mistakes. It takes away all kinds of creativity and individualism. These bots become one, similar voice regurgitating facts and bits of information learned from internet archives. Humans always will seek the easiest way out of a situation, and Chat GPT is an ingenious system that will help many, but its risks are so much greater than its rewards. If people and students become dependent on generative technology to create, there will be no individualism. Literacy, understanding, and creativity rates will decline rapidly to the point where most will begin to have the same voice: the voice of the computer.

As English majors continue to fight a long-winded battle against society's push for STEM, and in an economy built around capitalism, this new Chat bot is just another threat signaling the death of the authentic human voice. There is a call for all arts and English departments to limit their funding, giving room to science and math in this growing technology and fast-facts world. All Liberal Arts majors are encouraged to find who they are, their own style, and expand their knowledge for the sake of learning. This path creates people that are well rounded and can see many points of view and empathize with many situations. Scholars in these areas can easily pick apart complex situations, see different outcomes, and choose the best solution because they have been presented with problem-solving challenges all throughout their learning careers. They learn about the human psyche, anatomy, and patterns through history so that they are well equipped to handle real people and situations. Unfortunately, through the push of technology and the sciences only, human connection and creativity is likely to decline. In science, there is what's fact and what is not. There are hard and fast solutions to every problem, so students begin to expect life to be the same. Chat GPT is bringing the same mindset and mentality to literature and creative writing tracks.

Accessed from <https://www.stock.adobe.com/>



If a student is struggling with a paper topic, they can easily access this forum to guide their ideas, give them a lengthy outline, and then the student could potentially hand in the paper that was generated or edit the paper to their liking and turn it in. As an English major, I have often been faced with challenging paper topics and assignments that I have had to work through and build on my own. Recently, I had been struggling with a paper topic and writing style that called for a fluid, stream of consciousness style of writing that was still structured enough to inform and incorporate research and fact. By meeting with my professor and revising edition after edition, I was able to hone my descriptive skills and writing skills and have a much better understanding of not only my topic but also how to work through writing blocks. By being able to have a computer do all thinking for you, this new development cuts out the learning process of writing. If a student is unable to create rough drafts and edits of their own papers, they will not be able to move on to jobs that require the same skills. The student is unknowingly setting themselves up for failure and hurting their communication skills. They are also significantly

# JUNIORS POTLIGHT IN COMING:

By Lily Hebda



Marina del Carmen Martinez Sinclair is a Wilkes junior studying English and Secondary Education. Marina is a participant in the Wilkes University Panamanian partnership program, and looks forward to teaching English back home in Panama following graduation.



## Meet Marina!

*Marina del Carmen  
Martinez Sinclair*

Q: If you could go back in time, what would you change about your college experience so far and why?

A: I would love to be able to change the times that due to lack of maturity I dropped classes that were difficult for me, and by doing this I will now graduate a semester later than I thought I would. But that's okay; it helped me learn not to waste my time and not to give up so easily.

Q: Which professor has influenced you the most?

A: The college professor who has influenced me the most has been Bob Richards from my second major in Education. I love how he imparts the passion of education to his students. He is understanding, he is balanced, and he is very interested in us learning and becoming effective future teachers. Without a doubt he has influenced me the most. Also Dr. Tindell from Psychology 101, although she only taught me one general education course. She was so influential, to the point that I considered taking more psychology courses. She was very helpful in making me lose my shyness and share my opinions in class.

Q: Do you feel prepared to take on your future career?

A: Yes, thanks to God and the excellent teachers who have taught me what I need to know, I believe I am prepared.

Q: Which English class has been your favorite so far?

A: My favorite English class so far has been ENG 324. Although I found it very difficult in the beginning, I started to enjoy it because I got to know the history of English. I found it fun and interesting to practice the pronunciation of Middle English words in class.

Q: If you could give freshman English majors one piece of advice, what would it be?

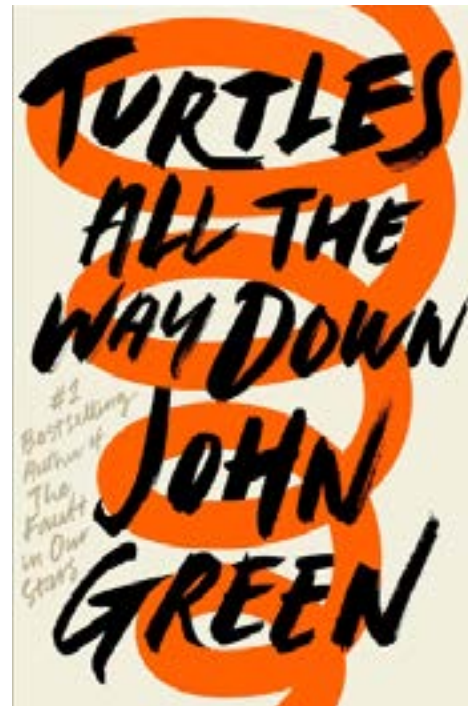
A: If I had to give one piece of advice it would be not to get frustrated when things don't go your way. A lot of times in English, or any other major for that matter, you will have big projects like essays. When the big paper or essay develops and it doesn't look like it's in good shape, don't give up. Just take a break, and go back to work on your essay later. Getting frustrated won't help you. That would be my advice.



# Turtles All the Way Down Book Review

By Mya Corcoran

Accessed from <https://collider.com/>



I first read *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green when I was in high school. Even though I remember thinking it was a good book, the novel sat untouched on my bookshelf for several years and in that time nearly escaped my memory. Only recently was I reminded of *Turtles All the Way Down* after reading a work in Dr. Kelly's Survey of American Literature I class which reminded me of the book and prompted me to reread it. The work that caused my memories of this book to resurface is "Creation Story," a Native American myth that details how the world was created. The myth explains that once all of humankind lived in what is referred to as the "upper world" and that below them was a world of darkness and monsters dubbed the "lower world." One day, a woman living in the upper world begins to sink down into the lower world. Upon seeing her plight, the animals of the lower world begin to devise a plan to help her. Ultimately, they save her by catching her on a turtle's back. The myth claims that it was on this turtle's back that the world was created. Admittedly, this Native American "Creation Story" and a contemporary novel by John Green do not have much in common, and my sense of connections between the two works may seem a little odd. Nevertheless, the reason why this myth sparked my memory of *Turtles All the Way Down* is that the novel utilizes

the metaphor of the world being on a turtle's back, the idea of which was first proposed in "Creation Story."

Upon rereading *Turtles All the Way Down*, I found that the beginning was a little slow and it took a couple chapters to really capture my interest. The novel seems to start out like any other cheesy mystery novel with two best friends, a missing person, and a love interest. The fact that the missing person is a billionaire named Russel Pickett, and that the best friends, Aza and Daisy, are out to solve his case for the \$100,000 prize makes the novel seem kind of absurd at first glance. It seems like you know exactly where the plot is going even before you start reading, but I was pleasantly surprised to find that the plot did not follow the trajectory that I initially expected. Despite the main plot point of the novel being centered around Russel Pickett, the mystery of his disappearance was something that drove the plot instead of consuming the plot. I was happy to find that there were many subplots that complimented the main mystery of the novel including Asa's internal struggles with anxiety and OCD, the dynamics of Asa and Daisy's relationship, and Asa's relationship with the missing billionaire's son, Davis. Once these further complexities were introduced, I became much more interested in the book. One of the aspects of this book I ended up liking the most was the fact that there was much more than just one thing going on – there were several different conflicts that I wanted to see an end to.

Another aspect of the book that I really liked was how Green depicted Asa's mental-health struggles. For sometimes entire pages at a time, Green allowed readers to get a glimpse of what it is like to live with anxiety and OCD by using a stream-of-consciousness narration style. I found it interesting how he put Aza's intrusive thoughts into conversation with her rational thoughts, so that readers can really see the internal struggle as she battles to have control of her own thoughts and consciousness. In this way, Green took something that is hard to understand if you have never actually experienced it and represented it in a way so readers could see exactly what Aza's mind is going through during what she describes as her "thought spirals."

Another aspect of the book that I liked, perhaps because it was the reason I picked up the book again after so many years, was the metaphor of the world being on a turtle's back. This idea comes up when Daisy tells Aza a story that her mother once told her. The story is about a disagreement between a scientist and an old woman. The scientist argues that the Earth is a sphere floating in space, while the old woman argues that the world is just

# Turtles All the Way Down Book Review

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a flat plane resting on a turtle's back. When the scientist asks the lady what she thinks the turtle is standing on, she responds that it is standing upon the shell of another turtle. She further explains each turtle is standing on the back of another turtle making it "turtles all the way down." I found it interesting that although the characters understand the scientist is right that the Earth is round, they still find value in the old woman's claim. Aza comments that the story is "somewhat akin to a spiritual revelation." Being that her anxious thoughts seem to have no clear start and no clear end point, the idea of an infinite amount of turtles supporting the world is a good metaphor for her constant mental health struggles. In an interview about the exchange between the scientist and old woman, John Green said, "They're both right because obviously the world is a sphere — I'm not like a flat-Earther or anything — but the world is also the stories we tell about it. The stories we tell about it matter. They shape the actual world and they shape our actual lives." I found this to be very interesting because as we talked about in Dr. Kelly's class when discussing "Creation Story," we use stories to make sense of the world around us. The stories we hear and read impact how we understand the world and our place in it. I thought that Green's use of that metaphor in the novel was really illuminating. Furthermore, it goes to show why a myth like "Creation Story" is part of the coursework for a college English class. Even though it is a story that was made up hundreds of years ago and science has proved that the Earth is in fact a sphere floating in space and not on top of a turtle's back, the turtle myth still has value as is evidenced by the fact that it is still being read today.

One place I felt the novel was lacking was in Green's overgeneralization of what it means to be an American teenager. The characters in the novel go to Applebee's nearly every day, the movies they watch are always *Star Wars* movies, and they have homework like writing reports on the Civil War. Green developed the main characters' major quirks and character traits really well, but when it came to the more mundane details of their lives it seemed to me like he did not pay as much attention to detail. I imagine that Green did this to make his characters more relatable to his teenage readers, yet I found his characters to seem more like teenage stock characters than relatable beings. To me, it almost seemed like he came up with the most generic examples of what teenagers like and what they do in their free time and went with it. In this way, his characterization seemed to be lacking the detail he put into other aspects of the book.

Overall, I really enjoyed rereading *Turtles All the Way Down*. I found some aspects of the book to be a little childish and unrealistic, yet Green balanced out the silliness with discussions of mature topics such as socioeconomic class and mental health as well as including some introspective philosophical discussions about life. I am glad that the Native American "Creation Story" reminded me of this novel, as it was a fun book to reread.

Collage Images Accessed from <https://stock.adobe.com/>  
Artist: Toshka





# The Impact of Chat GPT

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harming their critical thinking and critical writing skills. Through writing, people are able to become very good at expressing their thoughts and communicating with others in logical paragraphs. Logical thinking then allows students to be able to analyze evidence and many situations so that they can have their own individual thought. This leads right into students' ability to create a well thought out argument and present their own informed ideas fluently. Without this practice, humans will become that much more dependent on technology to think and communicate for us. Moreover, stories and creative writings will become nauseatingly similar. There will be similar minds and voices and thinking about the same few problems in the same few ways. Computers will easily infiltrate our creations and take away everything that is compelling about literature and the creative arts. Nothing is ever going to stop technology from advancing. Programs like ChatGPT are going to continue to pop up and become increasingly intricate in expediting many tasks for many people, but for students, it will create an environment of decreased literacy and overdependence on technology. English studies will become increasingly scarce because fewer and fewer people will be interested in not only writing but reading as well. There will be little interest in discussing old literature and how we have developed different ideas and voices throughout the ages. There will be no interest in dissecting poems and short stories for all of their hidden imagery and meanings. People will want the fast answers spit out to them that social media and movies offer. Letter writing and essay development will become an outdated scholarly tool that the last few true Communication and English majors are trying to hold on to in an ever progressing society. There will be no room for the writers.

Obviously, writers and writing will never be completely out of style. People will always read books, write plays, write movies, even write dialogue and storylines for video games. However, the percentage of people able to actually write and develop ideas well will most likely diminish greatly. If our English majors and high school students in English classes are able to coax a computer program into developing pages-long essays about whatever topic they need, these students will feel no real need to gain the skills themselves. For as exciting as every advance in technology is, there are always real consequences and this one may have very detrimental effects. Without students who want to learn how to write critically, English programs will continue to be underfunded, underpopulated, and undervalued. People need to be taught the importance of being able to write out one's thoughts and ideas or there will be some sad changes in the near future. The battle between the human mind and artificial intelligence is only going to get more severe.

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# Thoughts on a Novel: *The Shape of Things*

By Bailey DeJesus



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Empathy is an important emotion for human beings. It is what keeps us connected. Empathy is often pushed aside when people begin to misuse their intellect or higher visions. Some creators forget that they are not above the natural ways of life. They begin to act outside of moral obligations, and this is where major problems occur. These issues are wonderfully portrayed in the novel *The Shape of Things*. The book highlights key features of a passionate, harmfully driven, outspoken woman named Evelyn who lives entirely for her art and the revelation of truth. These goals become incredibly muddled when she meets the main character Adam, and they begin an irregular love story. *The Shape of Things* is a must read for all who love twisted characters, gray moral areas, and the pursuit of true, honest art. These two characters become both sculptors and sculpted in intricate ways, and their story reveals the insane power that people have over each other, especially the highly intelligent who know how to manipulate, and manipulate well, for their art.

Evelyn is, as stated before, the main protagonist of the story. She is an extremist who fears no judgment or consequences. For as aggravating as her character is, her ability to stay entirely true to her beliefs and ways is refreshing. We first meet her in an art museum attempting to deface a false sculpture, no small feat. Her character is solely driven by her passion for the arts and the truest expression of humanity and reality. In each conversation she has, there is seldom a time that she does not mention a philosophical or creative issue. Her outspokenness is what sets her at odds with her love interest, Adam, who is completely introverted and awkward. From their first meeting underneath the Sculpture of Adam (the famous biblically inspired sculpture of God's first creation of man) readers can get a hint of the work she might do to him through their relationship. The banter is playful, but the seriousness of her thoughts and words shows that she is never one to back down from a project. She ignites in Adam a spark of change and a shake in his groundwork as a person that she can't help but feed. What is most interesting is that she does seem to truly fall for him amidst her poking, prodding, and molding of his psyche. When he ends up cheating on her, she tries to appear as callous as possible but her hurt and betrayal is evident. Clearly, she felt more towards him than she may have planned, much more than a scientist would feel towards her subject.

Adam is introduced to readers as a loveable, tame soul who doesn't take too much care of his appearance. He is funny and smart, but shy and predictable, so not much happens in his life. Until he meets Evelyn. From their first encounter, Adam becomes obsessed with the woman who is his polar opposite and senior in both age and grade. This extreme infatuation quickly turns to love and adoration which is problematic for many reasons. For one, he struggles getting to know the real Evelyn,

# Thoughts on a Novel: *The Shape of Things*

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and even when he asks, the conversation is kept short and often turned back on him. Without getting to know who one is in love with, they often become idealized and unobtainable which can cause many arguments and disconnects. Yet, Adam loves completely so he does everything he can to show his love and attempt to keep her in their relationship. He gets tattoos, facial surgery, gym memberships, and an engagement ring all in an attempt to cling on to her and prove that they love each other, and as the novel makes clear he loses himself and two of his closest friends in the process. It is his dangerous obsession with her and the need to be validated by her love that drives everyone, including Evelyn, away from him. He loses who he was, who he wanted to be, and those closest to him.

The relationship between Adam and Evelyn comes to an abrupt end at the end of the story. From the beginning, Evelyn has been creating and planning her grand thesis that she has to present at the close of the school year. She never tells anyone what it is, but she mentions it fairly often. Adam and his two (now ex-) friends are there at her showing, and Evelyn becomes publicly unhinged. She reveals that Adam and his transformation from a chubby, shy, nobody to a fit, outgoing somebody was her project the entire time. Her main objective was to see just how far one human could push and change another person without coercion, just love and affection. She has molded him through their relationship into a more superficially desirable romantic candidate, and is proud of her accomplishments. Evelyn is clear to note, however, that with every change and improvement Adam made, his character became more and more flawed. As his attractiveness grew, his morality lessened, like a modern Dorian Gray without a magical portrait to keep track. This thesis brings about many, many social issues, the biggest being the trauma Adam has to endure. Evelyn reveals her truest form through this honest but ruthless act: an unforgiving and manipulative self-proclaimed deity.

This deity image also brings an overarching metaphor in the play from the character's names. From the Bible story of Adam and Eve, we receive these two characters, Adam and Evelyn. Evelyn contains the temptation and cunning of the serpent that tricked Eve into eating the apple, which comes out when Evelyn in the story is able to manipulate Adam once more and continues trying to obtain the powers and knowledge of a god. Adam is still seen following his Eve (or Evelyn in this story) and falling to her tricks. What is interesting about this comparison as well is that Adam, in both cases, has knowledge himself and is still able to make his own informed decisions, yet still follows the female's instructions. Evelyn takes on this god-like role of trying to be a creator molding her own creation out of Adam so that she can step outside of her own mortal and limited being.

The last few pages of this novel are what make it the infatuating yet frustrating story that it is. Evelyn's dance with what is morally correct and what is scientifically necessary is so intriguing. On one end, people despise Evelyn for the damage she has done to Adam both physically and mentally. She put him through months of

# Thoughts on a Novel: *The Shape of Things*

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psychological torment and deceit for her own gain. She treated him like a lab rat and did not show any signs of remorse. This kind of thinking and way of going about "sculpting" is terrifying because anyone could toy with another person's life and then turn around and say it was for art. It was for truth. It was for science. Without adding in an element of humanity and empathy, our world could easily fall to chaos. It is vitally important to humble oneself and value others lives before the pursuit of our own gain. Others can argue that without the pain and suffering of many science experiments before us, we would not be as medically advanced as we are now. But even so, emotions and feelings should be valued as much as science because there are always other ways to go about things now without harming others. All creators must be held accountable.

This story is a great example of the dangers of extremes. The searches for truth, art, and life in society are always tempting. These are the greatest achievements that we as a collective can achieve so why would one push away an opportunity for greatness? *The Shape of Things* takes these concerns all one step further by including an emotional and romantic involvement with the experiment. This exploitation of another one of humanity's greatest finds and most sought after feelings brings together two extremes (much like our polar opposites Adam and Evelyn were brought together) to show the torture one can set on another through a connection like they had. Both inflicted pain on the other and both were in the wrong for several actions they committed. Yet, Evelyn's abuse of her power is the greater evil because she perpetuated hers from a state of all knowing. Knowingly manipulating someone and not even considering the repercussions of one's actions, nor caring about the repercussions, makes Evelyn's actions insurmountably crueler. She knew exactly what she was doing from the time she started, and with all her other intelligence, there is no way she didn't consider the moral wrongs of her actions. What is most frustrating is that readers know she wants to gain acclaim and change public view, but her public display of her lack of empathy just stains her reputation. Her findings become obsolete because everyone who learns what she did will know that she does not obtain her research ethically. Without empathy and restraint, many gains are not worth the pain they inflict on others.

## Prompting Pen to Paper

The English Department had the honor of hosting and hearing from Dr. Ann Wallace, a poet, professor, and memoirist, who spoke to how writing—and poetry particularly— fosters healing and energy for her as a writer and person. She guided Dr. Davis's Victorian Literature students through engaging with poetry in a collaborative manner, and worked with tools that made writing that first line all the more easy. Perhaps you can try out some of these templates to help make putting pen to paper not so daunting!



Accessed from <https://www.womensmediacenter.com/>

### Try Some of these Prompts to Get Your Pen Moving!

1. Write a poem in which you introduce yourself, or speak about yourself, but nothing that you say is true.
2. Create a piece of narrative poetry where you spend the whole first stanza world building.
3. Create a poem with part, or all, of a language of your own creation.
4. Write a poem from the perspective of a speaker who has experienced vanishing years.
5. Write a poem that directs someone through something: "How to...."



# Being a Senior in Their Final Semester

By Alexis Charowsky



There's a saying about college that goes something along the lines of "These next four years are going to fly by." Being at the final stage of college with graduation only two months away in May is a bittersweet moment. All the hard work, hours of studying, and lack of sleep are all about to end. I want to say that I'm happy that I have been able to receive a higher education, and I'm grateful for all of the friends/teachers I have met along the way, but as this chapter comes to an end, so do these moments that I will remember for the rest of my life.

As a senior in high school, I remember being scared to come to college. I didn't want to leave all the friends I had back home and be separated miles away. My parents had raised me in my childhood home for eighteen years of my life, and I was not ready to leave from the place that I found the most comfort in. As my final year of high school was coming to end, my decision of what college I wanted to further my education at had to be

made. I was stuck between two schools, Wilkes being my first choice, and finally I chose that I would want to live in Wilkes-Barre for the next four years of my life. In coming here, I was undecided on what major I wanted to pursue. Since high school, I was always interested in a career in dermatology and studying the skin and what procedures best fit a person's lifestyle. Upon taking classes in Chemistry and Biology and having a miserable time, I knew that I did not want to go further in that career. Along with the stress of taking classes that I was doing poorly in, I noticed during my freshman year that I developed really bad anxiety. I would often have anxiety attacks about getting my work done and had no motivation to do anything other than stay in my dorm. This was not the lifestyle that I wanted to live during some of the best years of my life, and I made it a point to go to my old advisor and take tests to determine what classes I should take in order to make myself happier.

We made the decision that trying out English courses might be beneficial to me. I had always been a big reader growing up and don't know why I didn't enter this field right away. It is a requirement of Wilkes that we take ENG 101 and ENG 120 in order to graduate. I found that I enjoyed both of these classes and wanted to further pursue my path on the road of English. As I began to take more and more courses, I noticed that my grades started to improve each semester. I would say that the English program has had a big impact on who I became as a person. It is where I have made really close friendships and relationships with teachers who actually care about how well I am doing in school and daily life. The English program is not only an educational based department but is charismatic in student development and furthering one's education.

As I became more involved in the English program, I was asked to join the *Inkwell Quarterly* staff. Any student majoring or minoring in English is able to join this program and write about topics that interest them. We frequently have guest visitors at Wilkes or current events going on around the area that students will review. Other popular topics include book reviews, faculty updates, and spotlights on students who are a part of the staff or English program. I've found that joining the *Inkwell Quarterly* staff has helped me to advance my career in English. Writing for *Inkwell Quarterly* requires three crucial steps: deliberation of a topic, drafting, and editing/revision. Since we have the choice of what topic we want to write about, there are a variety of options we are able to choose from which forces us to pick which one we like best. From there we write a rough draft on our selected topic that we publish onto *Inkwell's* Google Drive that will be reviewed by the faculty advisor, with commentary on what we need to revise or add to our articles. From there, the final step before our articles can be published is to make any edits that were required or we thought to be useful for our final draft. After these three tasks are performed, our articles can be published in the next edition of *Inkwell Quarterly*.

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# Being a Senior in Their Final Semester

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Being a part of the *Inkwell* staff for the past two years has not only had a big influence on my growth as a person, but has also allowed me to write down thoughts I have for others to read. As this is one of my final articles before graduating, I thought that I could include some words of advice for those who are just entering at Wilkes or soon to be seniors in the same position as I:

1. **Go to class:** I know that some days you will dread going to class and will want to stay in your dorm/apartment. I've been in the same situation. As someone who skipped classes frequently as a freshman, I promise it is worth it to take the extra hour out of your day to attend. You're spending thousands of dollars to receive a higher education. Appreciate it.
2. **Take a break:** College can be a workload. At some points you will feel like you are a tiny human all alone in this huge world. There will be nights you will stay up too late, and then you will be exhausted for days. Listen to your body. Do not feel ashamed to put away work and get some rest. Things will get better, you will get the work done, and you will not always feel this way.
3. **Study:** Even if you think you know the materials, review them again before a test. Not everyone studies the same, so make sure you choose a place where you can concentrate. I've found that the most beneficial way for me to study is by retyping notes. Whatever your method may be, make sure you take some time in the days before your exams to refresh your memory on what you're learning. While taking a test, answer the questions you know for sure first and then proceed to ones you were unsure about. This will help you have more time to think about the questions you are stuck on.
4. **Make friends:** College is a new environment for every student. I came into college scared, thinking that I would be unable to make friends. Most students feel this way. If there is one thing I could have changed about living here the past four years, I would be more open to creating new friendships. Be the person who compliments others or starts a conversation. The students at Wilkes are some of the nicest people I have met, and I can reassure you that you can make many friends here as long as you open yourself up to others.
5. **Check in on your loved ones:** When moving to college, you're leaving the people who have raised you for all or most of your life. Just as you may have been scared or sad to leave the people you care about the most, they feel the same way. Give them a call or text here and there to update them. Even if you don't talk for long, they will appreciate every minute they get with you. Don't take these small conversations for granted.

In conclusion, I want to wish my younger peers well on their remaining time at Wilkes. Soon, you'll be in the same boat as me, preparing for your final days of school. My last token of advice for you is not to take advantage of the time you have in college. I remember like it was yesterday moving into Evans Hall and feeling like I had forever to go. Now, with May coming very soon, I will be packing up my college apartment and moving away from what I considered home over the past four years. The friends that I've made will now not be five minutes away, but hours. Cherish every little bit you can in your college years, as you will soon realize that the time spent here goes by faster than you think.



# MANUSCRIPT UPDATE

The *Manuscript* Society is currently accepting submissions for its upcoming 2022-2023 issue!

The submission period will be open through 31 March 2023.

If you are interested, please submit your work to [magazine@wilkes.edu](mailto:magazine@wilkes.edu) with your Wilkes email.

If you would like to learn more about The *Manuscript* Society or about upcoming *Manuscript* events, please contact [magazine@wilkes.edu](mailto:magazine@wilkes.edu). You can also stay connected to *Manuscript* by following our social media on Facebook (Mauscript @ Wilkes University), Twitter (@WilkesMag), and Instagram (@wilkes\_manuscript\_).

## Writing Center Hours

The Writing Center, located in the Alden Learning Commons, is open and offering support to student writers across the Wilkes curriculum.

Throughout the Spring 2023 semester The Writing Center is offering in-person as well as online support for all members of the Wilkes community who need writing assistance.

Stop by the Alden Learning Commons, or access online support via <https://www.wilkes.edu/academics/english/the-writing-center/index.aspx>

For more information, contact:  
**Dr. Chad Stanley**  
email: [chad.stanley@wilkes.edu](mailto:chad.stanley@wilkes.edu)

## Fall 2023 Upper-Level Class Listings

Course Number/Name	Date/Time	Instructor
ENG 201: Writing About Lit & Culture/WGS	MWF 12:00-12:50 M 1:00-1:50	Dr. Hamill
ENG 202: Technical Writing	MWF 9:00-9:50	Prof. Brown
ENG 202: Creative Writing	MWF 11:00-11:50	Prof. Kovacs
ENG 225: Comparative Grammar	MW 3:30-4:45	Dr. Stanley
ENG 228: Professional/Workplace Writing	MWF 1:00-1:50	Prof. Mayk
ENG 233: Survey of English Lit. II /WGS/&H	MWF 10:00-10:50	Dr. Hamill
ENG 282: American Lit. II / WGS	TR 8:00-9:15	Dr. Kuhar
ENG 337: Studies in Am. Romantic Lit	TR 1:00-2:15	Dr. Kelly
ENG 397: Seminar in Postmodernism	TR 9:30-10:45	Dr. Kuhar