

Murdock  
Furlough Dazed Work packet #5: Nov. 9-16

## AP English Language & Composition

Nothing is so fatiguing as the eternal hanging on of an uncompleted task. ~William James

### 1<sup>st</sup> & 2nd Pd. – 2 classes with Murdock

M Nov 9	T Nov 10	W Nov 11	Th Nov 12	Fr Nov 13
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Bellwork</li><li>▪ Grammar go over</li><li>▪ Talk “Mod. Prop.”</li><li>▪ Pennies intro</li></ul>		<b>No school: Veteran’s Day</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Assess Audubon/Dillard</li><li>▪ Amy Tan</li><li>▪ Pennies cont.</li><li>▪ Brainstorming topics</li></ul>	

### 6<sup>th</sup> Pd. – 2 classes with Murdock

M Nov 9	T Nov 10	W Nov 11	Th Nov 12	Fr Nov 13
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Bellwork</li><li>▪ Grammar go over</li><li>▪ Talk “Mod. Prop.”</li><li>▪ Pennies intro</li></ul>	<b>No school: Veteran’s Day</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Assess Audubon/Dillard</li><li>▪ Amy Tan</li><li>▪ Pennies cont.</li><li>▪ Brainstorming topics</li></ul>

### Work for the week:

- ✓ Due: M, Nov. 16 (T, 11-17, 6<sup>th</sup> pd.): Grammar Sheet 5: LEBRON
- ✓ Due: M, Nov. 16 (T, 11-17, 6<sup>th</sup> pd.): Reading and writing:
  - “Superman and Me” (page 110): questions 5 & 7
  - “Best in Class” (page 113): questions 4 & 8
  - “A Talk to Teachers” (page 123): questions 3 & 11
  - *AND YOU DON’T THINK I MIGHT GIVE YOU A WEE-SMALL QUIZ TO FERRET OUT WHETHER YOU’VE READ THE ESSAYS? THINK AGAIN, THINK AGAIN.*
- ✓ Due: M, Nov. 16 (T, 11-17, 6<sup>th</sup> pd.): Tan Multiple Choice *mea culpa*e
- ✓ Due: **W**, Nov. 18 (**Th**, 11-19, 6<sup>th</sup> pd.): ***Your own “Modest Proposals,”*** first-drafts: be funny and be smart! Double-spaced, usual font, 500-600 words – no less, no more. The attached Leonard Pitts columns, who’s style it wouldn’t be the worst thing to imitate, should be read by you and are about 650 words each.

**Furlough day class:  
NO FURLOUGH DAY THIS WEEK; THUS, NO ESSAY!**

### ***Keep in Mind:***

**Vocabulary is an on-going thing; look at those flashcards every day!**

**Next Vocabulary quiz: next Wednesday / Thursday, Nov. 18/19**

## **Fake rebels are pitiful, not shocking**

**BY LEONARD PITTS JR.: The Miami Herald; September 20, 2009**

I blame Elvis.

With Chuck Berry, Little Richard and other icons from rock's first generation, he pioneered an incendiary idea: that music could be more than a medium of entertainment, that it could and should also be a tool of cultural revolution. It was not, after all, just music that moved town fathers to ban rock concerts and angry men with sledgehammers to smash jukeboxes containing rock records.

No, it was what that music *meant*, the notion of white kids mixing with black ones, of status quo under siege, of girls having sex before they were 30.

More, it was the realization that the staid old lives the town fathers lived and the staid old things those angry men believed were about to be washed away upon a tide of change.

That big bang still echoes; nearly 60 years later, we are still wed to the idea that the music that has *meaning* is the music that causes unease.

But it takes more to do that now than it did in Elvis' day.

So pity Kanye West, the mercurial rapper who is in America's dog house for his antics at last week's MTV Music Video Awards. If you haven't heard about it, you need to get out more.

Suffice it to say he rushed the stage as doe-eyed teenage country music star Taylor Swift was giving an acceptance speech, grabbed her mike and declared that she didn't deserve the award, Beyoncé did.

It was par for the course for West, whose previous stunts and intemperate outbursts have earned him a reputation as unhinged and self-centered. Some have suggested this incident, along with Serena Williams' tennis court meltdown and Rep. Joe Wilson's boorish behavior in a joint session of Congress, signals a loss of American civility.

Maybe it does. But I feel it also suggests a popular culture that has run out of things to rebel against. Think about it: Everything those city fathers and angry men of six decades ago feared has come to pass and then some. The black kids are making *babies* with the white ones, status quo died of natural causes, and penis jokes are at home on prime-time TV. What was once the outrageous is now the everyday.

As popular music's ability to shock has declined, its attempts to do so have only become more naked and needy. From Britney kissing Madonna on MTV to Janet Jackson's bared breast at the Super Bowl to West's serial episodes of juvenility, pop musicians now give us stunts that seem more desperate than truly dangerous.

It is perhaps enough to note that whereas John Lennon took a stand against war that nearly cost him the ability to stay in this country, the best many of his modern counterparts can find to stand against is the idea their pants should fit their waists. Popular culture is increasingly home to artificial outlaws and fake rebels, revolution on the cheap that looks like the real thing unless you look too close. Then you recognize the rictus grin of the birthday party magician, sweat pebbling his brow as he prays no one sees the rabbit in his cummerbund.

A few days after the MTV show, I got an e-mail from my friend, Grayson Hugh, who is the greatest singer/songwriter you've never heard.

He was fuming over West's behavior: "I was just reflecting how dearly I would treasure one minuscule fraction of the financial support he is being given by the record industry! It pains me (and angers me, too) to see 'celebrity' musicians being so ungrateful and ungracious."

But what else can we expect in an era that accepts ungraciousness and ungratefulness as synonyms for courage and rebellion?

This is not, let me add, an argument about sound or style, but substance. Revolution is not a stunt.

And I submit that we actually have no shortage of conditions that still require rebellion. What we lack is the will to act. That's sad. Once upon a time, music was brave.

Now we have only echoes of the bang.

You are one of the biggest stars there has ever been, a star so big the mere sight of you causes hysteria and stampedes, a star so big, other stars turn into gushing fanboys when they meet you.

And there comes a night -- another in a long series -- when you cannot get to sleep, when you lie abed like any workaday shlub, eyes wide open, mind wide awake, held hostage by the relentless ticking of the clock.

But you are not a workaday shlub. You are a *star*, source of light and heat earthlings look up to see. One of the perks is that you have a doctor at your beck and call, so you ask him for something to put you to sleep.

Unfortunately, what he gives you doesn't work. He gives you something else, but that doesn't do it, either. After five tries, you're still awake.

And all through that long night, you are asking for, pleading for, *demanding* something you've used before, something much stronger. Finally, late in the morning, the doctor caves in. He adds the drug to your IV. And it works, all too well.

That, according to court documents released this week, is how Michael Jackson died.

### **Possibly prosecution**

Now, the physician, Dr. Conrad Murray, faces the very real possibility of prosecution for manslaughter. According to the documents, he told police he administered propofol -- a powerful anesthetic typically used only in a hospital under the supervision of an anesthesiologist -- despite the fact that he had already given the singer three other sedatives five times over six hours, *and* despite the fact that he suspected Jackson was developing an addiction to the drug.

I will leave it to others to assess Murray's culpability in Jackson's death. I'm more interested in Jackson's. Because if the narrative suggests negligence on the part of the doctor, what does it say about the patient?

Here in the world of workaday shlubs, after all, it's hard enough to imagine a doctor making a house call, much less having one on site from whom you could demand a favored drug. Of course, Michael Jackson left that world a long time ago; he became internationally famous when he was 11.

And his was a particularly isolating fame. In the first place, it was of an intensity that made even the semblance of ordinary life impossible. In the second place, it struck when he was a child, i.e., before he was fully formed, so that he never knew himself any other way, had almost literally no experience with what most of us would call normal.

And then he became more famous, still.

The trouble with fame is that it induces awe and the person who regards you with awe is unlikely to tell you what you don't want to hear. So the tale those court papers tell is hardly surprising.

Long before he died, Jackson's life was a cautionary tale of what can happen when you become too big for anyone to tell you no.

You think he would have driven his finances into the ground if there'd been someone who could say, No, Michael, you don't need another golden cherub or portrait of you as medieval king?

### **Overdone surgery**

You think he would have done such violence to his features if there'd been someone who could say, No, Michael, don't carve your nose down until it looks like it belongs on some Disney princess?

You think he would have made himself an object of ridicule if there'd been someone who could say, No, Michael, you should not allow children into your bed, no matter how innocent you think it is?

And do you think he'd be dead if his doctor had said, No, Michael, I'm not giving you what you want?

We celebrate fame because it liberates us from restrictions that apply to others.

But the moral of this story is that there are some restrictions from which we ought never be freed.

When you're too big to be told no, you're too big. And ultimately, that's Michael Jackson's ineffable tragedy. He died from an overdose of yes.

I hope this column makes you sick.

See, we'll be talking about Nazis, something many of us are doing lately. Indeed, just this week a fellow named Joseph emailed me about a caller he heard on a radio show. The man, vexed over health care reform, likened President Obama to Adolf Hitler. Asked why, he said, "Hitler took over the car companies, then health care and then he killed the Jews."

Said Joseph: "I almost swerved my vehicle off the road when I heard that."

But the caller is hardly unique. Google "Obama + Nazis" and you get almost 7 million hits. Nor is the phenomenon new. Substitute President Bush's name and you get nearly 2.8 million.

Even granting that many of those hits are benign, it seems obvious the Nazis have invaded American political rhetoric in a big way. As in Rush Limbaugh declaring health care reform "a Hitler-like policy," swastikas popping up at protest rallies, a poster depicting Obama with Hitler's mustache and a pamphlet which says: "Act Now To Stop Obama's Nazi Health Plan!"

It's important to remember that the Nazis are passing out of living memory; U.S. soldiers of that era are said to be dying at the rate of 1,200 a day. Which makes it too easy, I think, for a nation of notorious historical illiteracy to remake the Nazis as some kind of all-purpose bogeymen for slandering political enemies and scoring cheap rhetorical points.

So I thought it would be good to make you sick, i.e., to spend a few minutes reminding some and teaching others what you invoke when you invoke the Nazi regime.

For the record, then: it was Nazis who shoved sand down a boy's throat until he died, who tossed candies to Jewish children as they sank to their deaths in a sand pit, who threw babies from a hospital window and competed to see how many of those "little Jews" could be caught on a bayonet, who injected a cement-like fluid into women's uteruses to see what would happen, who stomped a pregnant woman to death, who once snatched a woman's baby from her arms and, in the words of an eyewitness, "tore him as one would tear a rag."

That's who the Nazis were, ladies and gentlemen ... those obscenities plus six million more. They were the triumph of ideology over reason and even over humanity, the demonization of racial, religious and political difference, the objectification of the vulnerable other. And the authors of a mass murder that staggers imagination, still.

You would think, then, that where they are invoked to draw a parallel or make a point, it would be done with a respect for the incalculable evil the Nazis represent. You would think people would tread carefully, not because of the potential insult to a given politician (they are big boys and girls) but because to do otherwise profanes the profound and renders trivial that which ought to be held sacred by anyone who regards himself as a truly human being.

But in modern America, unfortunately, rhetoric often starts over the top and goes up from there. So fine, George W. Bush is "a smirking chimp." Fine, Barack Obama is "a Chicago thug." We have a Constitution, after all, and it says we can say whatever we want. It doesn't say it has to be intelligent.

And yes, you are even protected if you liken Obama or Bush to Hitler. Yet every time I hear that, it makes me cringe for what it says about our collective propensity for historical amnesia and our retarded capacity for reverence. Once upon a lifetime ago, six million people with DNA, names and faces just like you and I, were butchered with gleeful sadism and mechanistic dispatch. "Six million people."

You and I may no longer respect one another, but is it asking too much that we still respect them?

