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Abe Whiting
College of DuPage

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On Trap Avoidance

by Abe Whiting

(English 101)

The Assignment: Write a paper explaining what you hope to accomplish by attending college.

Life without education is a cursed existence. My father is an entrepreneur. He has been for sometime, only because he really never had too many other options. I give him credit because he is a master woodworker, and he grew a struggling little business out of dust into a competitive force. Kudos to that, but the poor man has broken his back throughout his entire life; and now, once again, he finds himself in a straight jacket after the economic slump of 9-11. Only a fool doesn't learn by the folly of others. No school, no alternate job options. No alternate job options and you find yourself 50 years old with a liver that's probably shot from over-drinking. Your health is questionable from stress, smoking a pack a day, and eating ramen noodles and hard-boiled eggs as your primary staples. This, my dear audience, is not my idea of a good time. Nor should any individual have the misfortune of such purification by pain only to see the IRS waiting, sword raised, to give you your mortal blow. Circumvention of this fate and enhancing my personal growth, were my primary concerns for furthering my schooling.

Initially, I was very unsure of what I wanted to do so I avoided going back to school. I let myself drift for a couple years. I worked for dad, drank, and slugged around. It didn't take long for a few things to slap me in the face-- lightly at first, then harder and harder until my nose was bleeding. I had no options. And as the tides of the economy ebbed and flowed, so did self-medication and emotional anguish. Money and business were the million-dollar words and consumed all who lived in that house. When things were bad, hell fire danced from my father's lips and the misery spread. I had no schooling so I could get no alternate job that would actually aid the situation. I couldn't leave because I couldn't get a good job. Instead, I just soaked up the cold shadows of desperation.

This brings me to the next and highly longed for aspect of education, People. Earlier I used the word house to describe where I lived. This was intentional, as there is a huge difference between a house and a home. In a *house*, love is a hard little entity to come by when the Great Lord Cash is flexing his muscles over his domain. Thankfully, all the people you meet in our education system, quite adequately obliterate loneliness, boredom and depression. Sometimes, when you're lucky, you even get a little love fix. I would have never said this five years ago, but I find the social aspect of school incredibly rewarding in so many ways. It has become a major part of what I'm becoming.

Furthermore, aside from external forces prompting my actions and desire, I have always loved to learn. Strike that: learning is an addiction. Once I start to know, I'm not happy until I *do* know. Due to this compulsion that was engrained since childhood, I have become adept at learning to learn. It's one of my own personal arts: the art of acquiring, storing, and recalling information. Unfortunately, perfectionism and mastery can become rather obsessive-compulsive in nature; and I've also learned to take a chill pill or the madness gets too strong. Nonetheless, I have found college-level schooling to be a knowledge junkie's pleasure den.

Moreover, the conglomeration of cultures has alone opened up doors to new worlds: different thoughts, personalities, and psyches that only lurked in the borderlands of "white boy" suburbia. In one of my last classes, I met a girl from Iran. Human? Yes, but definitely from another planet. She was humble, sweet, and more innocent than any American girl above the age of ten. How she manages to survive this hostile landscape, I don't know; but I would like to. Curiosity is a driving force. The depth at which each individual subject is explored I find to be completely fascinating. I can be immersed for weeks in microscopic reality or the fantasy lands of art and literature and not grow tired.

To sum up, I love to find things that are new and hook me. I've also learned to despise being

trapped in corners. For me, school and education have become a double-edged blade: one side to fight for what I do enjoy and benefit from, the other to fight the demons that close me in if I don't keep options open. People all too often walk the same path so frequently that they don't realize they have worn a deep trench until they try to climb out. My hope is that I can keep my routes varied enough that I avoid such erosion, and school will be one of my guides.