

Group A: Generally these students would not consider themselves to be very strong English students in August.

Student 1--August Essay

Joshua in a Box

Joshua was stuck in a box. He tried so hard to escape, but everything he tried turned against him. Joshua used his head, feet, and fists trying to escape from the box. Joshua at last was finally outside of the box and he was jumping with joy. He wasn't out for long. Joshua himself turned into a box.

The idea that I got from watching this film is to always be happy. My reasoning for that is, when he calmed himself down and wasn't frustrated, he achieved his goal. Which at the time was to get out of the box.

Student 1--May Essay

Kiwi A Flight

The short animation film Kiwi, created by Dony Permedi, was a story about a Kiwi bird, fulfilling its dream. Permedi showed this by implementing different types of audio and visual tracks in this animation film. Permedi put the perfect music to fit what was happening during the scenes. He didn't have any text tracks, disregarding his credentials.

He had shown a lot of different interesting visuals in this film. I think that he is trying to show that the Kiwi bird is a very smart animal. In the beginning he shows the bird tying a rope on tree with a knot. It all shows the Kiwi nailing in a tree into the mountain side horizontally. Now, I feel that he has a type of bias towards this type of bird. Showing a little bird doing these actions that a human being couldn't even do. I also noticed that when Kiwi was falling to his eventual death, he just grew small wings. Near the very end you see Kiwi closing his eyes and a tear rolls down his face. How he portrayed the Kiwi as a smart bird in the beginning, did not finish the same because the tear coming from Kiwi was obvious that the Kiwi knew he couldn't fly but did it anyway.

He did not include any text tracks but in my opinion he could have in certain parts of the film. I think he could have explained on the screen what a Kiwi bird is. If he would have put like, Kiwi birds can't fly or something like that, it changes the way you view the film right from the beginning and you can't even more drown in when he's close to falling.

During the whole film he had music and a lot of background noise. He only had two different tunes playing, in the beginning and at the end. The tune in the beginning just draws you into the film with a nice kind of welcoming tune. The ending tune was exactly the opposite. It was kind of depressing and it had more of a non-welcoming feel. All the sounds in this film were non-diegetic

because its an animated film. From the sounds of the nails nailing in the tree or the big thump as he fell to his death.

Unfortunately, Kiwi couldn't have his dream and fell to his death doing it. Permedi was trying to show that not all dreams come.

Group B: These students would be characterized as pretty typical entering sophomores in August.

Student 2--August Essay

The Boxes Purpose

Joshua in the box means that you shouldn't tackle your problems too hard. You should first think and analyze the problem. You should think of easy ways not aggressive ways to get away from your problem. *Joshua in the box*, Joshua is stuck in a blue square box and Joshua wants to escape the mysterious square shaped object. Joshua first analyzes the closed crate he was captured in. By touching and feeling the texture of the crest. Then he starts punching, headbutting, and tackling the random cube. The cube didn't open. Joshua is acting by anger and he just lets his emotions take control. But, once he cools down he figures out or find away out. So he leans on the wall of the magical crate for a break. He starts tapping his finger and the last tap, his finger goes through the wall. Then he figures out that he just needs to gently push through the wall. I think it was a test to see how long it took Joshua.

Student 2--May Essay

Interpretation of Joshua

My interpretation of John Lange's message in *Joshua in a Box*, is people are in their current lives but, some people don't realize that or understand that and want to escape. However, once they escape they realize that they were placed there for a reason. In *Joshua in a Box*, Lange plays music during the video that influence sadness and curiosity in the viewer's heart. The visual, by Lange, portrays Joshua as a curious and confused character. The character's actions presented in the video shows the emotions and feelings of the character and the atmosphere. Because there was no text presented throughout the video, interpretation of Lange's message is felt to the viewer.

In the beginning of *Joshua in a Box*, John Lange, portrays Joshua as confused or lost, since he is inside a box. As Lange begins the video, the first scene creates curiosity and thoughts build up in the viewers mind about reasons Joshua is examining the box. When Joshua appears, he begins to examine the box, this creates worry and guilt inside the viewers toward Joshua. Lange provides music with the visual, which combine creates these feelings. As Joshua makes aggressive actions, the music begins to increase speed, which helps build up suspense in the viewer.

In the middle of Joshua in a box, Lange portrays Joshua as and aggressive angry character. Lange, presents Joshua banging and hammering the walls. These actions create the feeling toward Joshua was placed there for specific reason. But, from Joshua's actions, viewers began to analyze

Joshua in a different perspective. Viewers began to think Joshua is aggressive and angry, in which presents Joshua as a negative person. But, as the middle of the video plays on, Joshua begins to calm down, which persuades the viewer to think that Joshua has given up. Doing this, Lange decreased the speed of the music as Joshua leans on the wall. This scene provides evidence to show music and visual combine creates feeling and thought.

Towards the end of Joshua in a Box, John Lange provides the resolution of the video and confusion for the viewer. When, Joshua makes the crack in the wall, Lange shows that after going against protection opportunities open up. Once, Joshua is released from the box, he stands there, which creates regret and sadness. Lange, places a close up on Joshua, letting the viewer examine the Joshua's facial expression. As, Joshua begins to let a tear fall down, viewers began feel sorrow or sadness toward Joshua. By this time, Joshua was turning into a box and another Joshua appears. Lange creates this scene to cause the viewer to think and collect all information and evidence, to combine all the pieces. Once, the viewer has combined the thoughts, the viewer can realize that Joshua, was placed inside that box for realize. When Joshua was inside the box, Joshua didn't change into a box, Joshua stayed as it was. The viewers could think that the box was sometime of protection or blessing.

Student 3--August Essay

Life Related to a Box

Today I watched the clip Joshua in a box. In this film it shows some sort of an animal who is suddenly trapped in a box. When he realizes that he is stuck in the box he becomes curious as to how he got into the box and how he's supposed to get out. He becomes very frustrated because he can't find his way out and he really wants to get out. Eventually he finds his way out a crack in the side of the box. Right after he gets out he is very happy and relieved not to be trapped in the box anymore. After his choice has really sunk in he immediately gets homesick. He misses his box, his shelter, his home. The ending is very surprising, he suddenly turns into a box himself and there is a new animal in the box that he made.

In this paragraph I will explain what I think the clip represents. I personally think that the box represents the family of Joshua. I also think that Joshua represents a teenager. He struggles to get out of his box and gets very upset when he can't. This is like a teen asking their parents for permission to

do something and their parents don't let them. When Joshua finally gets out of the box, he realizes that it's all fun and games anymore. Just like when you go off to college. Then when Joshua turns into a box I think it shows that he grew up and is not experiencing the same thing that his parents, or the box, did. He had his own kids and now he wants them to stay in the box, just like his parents made him.

Student 3--May Essay

There is No Place Like Home

'*Joshua in a Box*', by John Lange is a film that is up for interpretation. Throughout the video, the author uses several techniques to engage the viewer's emotions. By using sound and visual tracks, pathos, a conflict, and symbolism, we come to understand the message the author is trying to portray. Although it can be easily overlooked and often underappreciated, a person's true happiness is most often found at home.

John Lange incorporates many soundtracks into his film to support his main idea. While viewing the film, you notice a song playing in the background. The same song plays the entire time, but the volume and tempo change depending on the emotion that the main character is feeling. At the beginning of the film, when the character is first in the box, the background music that is playing sounds like it is supposed to portray what the character is thinking. The character is thinking about getting up, going out, and doing something different with his life. It seems as though he has grown tired of the life that he now leads. Once the character realizes that he can't get out of the box, he gets extremely angry and his desire to break out grows even stronger than before. The music in this section of the film shows how impatient the main character is by speeding up and getting louder. When the character finally breaks out of the box, or his home, the music becomes happy, cheerful, and more fast-paced. The music turns happy because the character is now free to move on with his life and live it the way he intends. After

being out of the box for a little while, the character realizes that he misses his home and the music gets sad and slow to highlight how the character is feeling.

The author also uses visual tracks as another way to show that there is no place like home. When the box first appears around the character, he becomes very curious as to what he should do. When he realizes that he can't get out of the box, or his home, he gradually becomes more impatient, almost claustrophobic in the box. The film shows him very angrily banging on the box. After a long period of time where all the character does is try to find a way out of the box, it is made clear by visual tracks that the character feels defeated. After his last attempt to try and escape, it becomes clear that Joshua's final hope has completely slipped away. This is the writer's way of pointing out to the viewer that the character has given up. Later, when he finds the hole in the wall, his feelings take an unforeseen turn. When he eventually breaks out of the box, he is very content with himself. Using a different camera angle, the camera zooms in very close to the character's face to frame his utter happiness. Then within a matter of seconds, the character again becomes very subdued. He realizes that his freedom from the box was not as gratifying as he had hoped. This, in turn, ultimately leads him to believe there truly is no place like home. The camera zooms in on his face as a tear runs down his cheek. This single tear represents how much he misses his home. The writer follows the belief that less is more by showing only the single tear falling from his eye. This creates a more dramatic effect because it points out the powerful feelings that can be generated by a solitary tear. Joshua missing home can create a sense of empathy in the viewer, which is why a single tear creates such a powerful impact.

By using pathos, the author helps the viewer feel emotion when watching his film. He portrays

emotion by combining the visual and sound track. When the character really wants to get out of the box, his face turns mad and the music speeds up and gets louder. This is the writer's way of making sure the viewer really understands how the character is feeling. It is as if the music supports the visual, giving it the extra push it needs to bring about emotions in the audience. Another example of when the author combines forces is when the character breaks free of the box. The visual track shows the character on cloud nine as the score symbolizes these feelings of great joy.

While viewing '*Joshua In a Box*', you realize that throughout the film the author strives to highlight the character's inner conflict. In the beginning, the character seeks freedom. He doesn't slowly consider the idea, he makes a very impulsive decision that is way too fast for his own good. He tries very hard to escape the box because he thinks that it's the right choice for him. When he finally does get out, he almost instantly realizes that he misses his home. Immediately he gets very upset and wishes that he hadn't tried so hard to break free. This supports the author's main point that there is no place like home because once the character escapes, he wants only to return.

Finally, the author uses symbolism to develop the main idea that there is no place like home. In the film, the box represents the character's home. I know this because the box is where he grows up. Individuals often hit a point where they feel compelled to do something different with their life. Joshua feels that he wants to experience what the world outside of his box has to offer. Another example is when the single tear runs down the character's face. The reason the author chose to show one tear is because he thought that it would make a more dramatic impact than a person crying. An additional clip in the film where the author uses symbolism is when the character is very angry and trying to get out of

the box. After he runs himself into the wall trying to escape, he melts to the ground in utter despair. This symbolizes Joshua's discouragement over the fact that he can't escape this obstacle. Again the author utilizes symbolism when the character finally escapes out of the box. Right after he wiggles his whole body through the tiny hole, he flies up into the air almost like a bird being set free. This represents freedom, his true happiness.

The author of, '*Joshua In a Box*', John Lange, wants the reader to understand that in life, there truly is no place like home. He does this by combining visual and sound tracks, utilizing pathos, highlighting the character's inner conflict, and using symbolism. These techniques all combine to emphasize Lange's belief that home anchors true happiness.

Group C: Generally, these students were pretty strong students in August and remained that way throughout the year.

Student 4--August Essay

The Meaning of *Joshua in a Box*

I think the film, *Joshua in a Box* symbolizes problems that people face in their lives. There are many things during this film that contribute to this idea. At the beginning of the video, Joshua is shown trapped in a box. He is confused about where he is, at first, but then he becomes angry and tries to get out of the box. He tries many things like slamming into the wall, to try to escape, but that doesn't work. Then he finds a rip in the box. He realizes that this could be his way to leave. It took him awhile, but he finally manages to escape. After he gets out, he celebrates by sticking out his tongue at the box, but then he sheds a tear. After that, he turns himself into a box, or a problem, for someone else to become trapped in because he is probably angry at the person who gave him a problem.

When Joshua tries to escape the box, it symbolizes him trying to escape the "problem". When he finds the rip, he sees it as a way to get out of the box (or problem). After he gets out, he cries. I think he shed a tear because he is emotionally hurt from the problem that he faced, and to get back at the guy who hurt him, he became a problem for the other guy, when he turned himself into a box. I think he did it for a specific reason. When someone makes another person angry, people usually do something to get back at them. This doesn't mean that it is okay to do that. Overall, I think that this story is symbolizing a problem that everyone faces in life.

Student 4--May Essay

Joshua in a Box Analysis

We tell ourselves “I want to be my own person”, and society tell us to “be yourself!” and so many other things like this, but we don’t really follow through with what we think we will do. We try so hard to get out of what others tell us to do, but we end up being the person who is pressuring others to change. Throughout Joshua in a Box, John Lange demonstrates the issue of conformity. This idea can be analyzed and used to learn a lesson about life.

The box in Joshua in a Box symbolizes conformity. At the beginning of the short film, Joshua is “investigating” the box, or the idea of conformity. This is just like in real life, when people start to realize that they are conforming to other people’s actions and ways of life.

Next, Joshua become very angry at the box and starts banging on the sides and ends up kicking it, and stubbing his toe. After that, he runs into the wall and crashes to the ground. This relates to real life because we, as humans, experience trouble when we are figuring things out in life. For example, in high school, students are pressured to be like everybody else, to conform. During the high school years, students experience great difficulty trying to figure out who they really are. Students are pressuring other students to be just like them, and unfortunately, many students go through these difficult situations and have changed. Joshua is showing a small scale of this. He is trapped in the box, which is telling him to conform to the box, to change himself to be able to stay in the box. When he is angry, he is showing that he doesn't want to conform, but he is still going through this "conformity process".

Later in the video, Joshua gets up, and thinks about his situation. This is just like what we should do in our life when we experience problems dealing with conformity, or anything else for that matter. We need to think through things before getting angry at everything and everyone. Taking just a few minutes before taking action can really help the outcome of your situation.

Next, Joshua finds a hole in the box and eventually finds his way out of it. When people experience conformity, they will try to find a way out of it. We, as a society, try to find the easiest way out of situations that we don’t want to be in. In Joshua's case, he just wanted to get out of the box, and get away from what the box was trying to make him conform to.

Finally, after he climbs out of the box, Joshua sheds a tear and then becomes a box himself. This symbolizes how some humans cope with their struggles. People cry, and feel sorry for themselves for a little bit, but then they take action, and in this case Joshua becomes a problem for other people. He ended up being the person that is trying to conform others. In general, society today ends up conforming to what others tell it to do, and then they tell others

how they should conform to society. It is just a revolving cycle. We become what we are trying to escape.

The audio track emphasizes this theme even more. At the beginning, the music sounds kind of western and gives the video a tough feel, it makes the viewer feel like something drastic is going to change in the video. Throughout the film, the intensity of the music depends on what is going on with Joshua. When he is mad at the box, the song gets more intense. When Joshua is thinking about his options, it slows down and kind of relaxes the viewer. This helps the viewer understand the film more. Overall, the audio track helps to increase the effectiveness of theme and helps the viewer feel like they know even more about what is going on in the film.

As you can see, the theme of this video is quite simple: conformity. Joshua is being pressured to conform to the box and he doesn't like it, but after a while, he ends being the one who is trying to conform others. This is just like our society today, we become what we are trying to escape. It is a vicious cycle that is ruining the human race.

Student 5--August Essay

Getting Out of the Box

In the film *Joshua in a Box* there are many different interpretations. I believe that it represents a kid in high school moving on to college. And there are many scenes that lead me to believe this.

The first clue was when Joshua looked around and didn't see anything. This could represent him not representing what is on the other side, college. But all he knows for sure is that he wants out of the box, and into the new space, college. This is why he goes crazy, he wants to get away from the regular box and out of the box where he is in control. But he can't force his way out so he leans back, relaxes, and waits until he is finally able to break through. He finally breaks out and but he suddenly realizes how good it was back in the box. This represents a kid in college understanding how well he had it when he was in high school. Once he realizes he can't go back he sheds a little tear, pulls himself together, and turns into a box for the next generation. Having the box represent the adult and his home, another kid comes into the home at the end of the film. And the cycle continues.

Due to all the reasons I have found, I believe Joshua in a box represents a kid leaving home and going off to college. But there is also a greater meaning. That you should cherish your time with your family, because one day you will be on your own.

Student 5--May Essay

Boxed In

Joshua In A Box, a film by John Lange, Joshua represents someone being in kept under a set of rules. And the message is that rules are put in place for a your own good. By analyzing the beginning, middle, and end of the film, it is logical to believe this message.

In the beginning Joshua doesn't seem to mind the box. The story starts out with Joshua being placed inside a box, which represents a set of rules. Joshua doesn't seem to have a choice of if he wants to be in or outside the box at the beginning. This would be like growing up with your parents, you don't get to choose your parents and their rules. Then Joshua checks the limitations

of the box by looking around, like a kid seeing how much he could get away with before his parents became angry.

Then Joshua gets anxious and he tries to bust out of the box. Teens try to break out of the set of rules because they doesn't like being restricted. But Joshua has no effect on the box put in place. Like when parents won't budge on giving you a later curfew. Joshua then gets furious and keeps pounding into the side of the box, like a teenager doing something against the restrictions their parents set. In the film Joshua doesn't know what's on the other side, so he doesn't know what he is getting into. The box is there to contain him until he is ready. This is like kids thinking they can live on their own but their parents know what they are not ready, so the parents put rules in place to protect the kid until they are mature enough to be on their own.

When Joshua pushes through the box it represents when a kid leaves his parents to live on his own. And Joshua sheds a tear when he realizes how good his life was back in the box. This would be comparable to a teen anxious to go off to college but then realizes that living with your parent's rules wasn't that bad. And finally Joshua turns into a box and another similar character appears inside the box. Just like someone becomes a parent and sets rules for their kids.

By seeing the connections of Joshua in his box to a kid under a set of rules it is easy to see the relation to a kid under a set of rules. By having Joshua represent a kid growing into an adult, John Lange is able to get his message across that rules are put in place because we don't always know what is best for ourselves.

General Observations

After spending 9 months with these students and looking at all of the essays, I have these thoughts:

- None of these essays is “perfect” in any sense of the word. All of them need more revision, more crafting, a “cooling off” period and a re-seeing period leading to a true “revision” period. The idea of actually re-vising or re-writing a paper still seems to be an anathema to sophomores (and nearly all high school students) that I work with these days.
- All of these essays conformed to the standard school-essay convention. The writers did not pull from experiences “outside” of the film to explain the film. They are all, as sophomores, well on their way to mastering “essay-speak.” Unfortunately, I really don’t want them to continue down that path. Writing a “real” non-school essay in school is more entertaining for the writer and the reader.
- There is clear evidence that in the May essays, students are using the writing and thinking strategies that were practiced through

out the course. Again, they are a long ways from mastery or proficiency, but they are making progress.

- Aside from Student 4's essay, these are pretty typical. Somewhere in the middle of second semester, Student 4 decided that she could and should improve his/her performance. Growing tired of always delaying work and fighting a deadline (usually losing to the deadline), this student decided that life could be lived in a different way, and at least for the remainder of the semester, struggled to change the work habits and the attitudes that guided his/her work. Of all my students, her progress was the most dramatic, but it was also not typical.
- Some one, somewhere, can assign a numerical score to the August essay and then a score for the May essay in order to determine whether or not students have improved. It seems to me, however, that translating learning into a number or a grade actually devalues the growth that has taken place.
- In many ways, this exercise is nothing more than a pre-test and a post-test. But to me, it feels different. When I take pre-test, I really do not expect to know much about the topic because I have not studied it. In this case, students should be able to explain what a text means and to explain how they arrive at that understanding. In these essays, I think I have a picture of the student's thinking/writing skill in August and in May. I do not feel compelled to have a rubric score.
- Every student was able to see the difference between their work in August and their work in May. They could see how their thinking, their analysis, and their writing had improved. This was probably the most important aspect of this task. Student memory about a class seems to stretch back about three weeks. Many times students will end a class thinking that it was a waste of time or useless. Here, however, every student had proof that the course, whether they liked it or not, had not been fruitless.

As a gardener, I know that when I plant my tomatoes in the spring, I will see no evidence of growth while the roots develop, and the worse thing that I can do is to disturb the plant to see if everything is "ok." When I fertilize my plants, I realize that I will not see the results the next day. I need to weed, monitor for insects and disease, but most of all, I need to give the plant time to accept my tending and to grow. Even though daily assessments will probably be administrated as a means to being an effective teacher, we cannot forget that effective teachers also plant seeds of learning that develop and grow over time—in fact learning demands time (and practice) to bear the fruits of the student's and the teacher's labor.

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