**"On schooling's useless lessons"**

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**by Stacey Perk**

I loved high school. I love the memories I have of **parties**, **football games**, and **hanging out** with my friends. These are the things I have taken with me, not the **useless information acquired in the classroom**.

I remember **complaining** about how I'd never use knowledge I gained in the classroom in real life. I **regretted** all the time I devoted to school because, in the end, I didn't remember the algebraic equations, historical dates, or the periodic table.

A problem exists within the high-school education system: **It doesn't prepare students for their careers**. When I decided in high school that my major was going to be journalism, I took the only class offered by my school in hopes of learning the journalistic writing style.  **I didn't learn anything** from that class. My teacher was not a journalism teacher; she was an English teacher. We spent every class silent reading instead of learning about the inverted pyramid.

The school system needs a reality check; most students aren't going to be **mathematicians, historians, or chemists**.  **So why do we have to take these classes**? If students know at an early age what they want to do for their careers, then high schools should offer classes in that area. This would make me feel that the time I spent in the high-school classrooms **wasn't a waste**.

When I got to college, the education system did a better job of focusing on students' career goals. But even then, I found myself stressing over statistical equations and astronomy facts during my first two years. Why? **I was never going to use that information**. For open majors, the general-education requirements are great. For me, they were a **waste of time and tuition**.

Not only did the gen-ed classes **waste my time and money**, but they **also hurt my GPA**. Being forced to take classes makes them less interesting. If they aren't interesting, you won't do well in them. **Statistics and astronomy bored me, so I opted not to attend class and neglected to study for them**. **These gen-ed classes caused my GPA to plummet**. I worried that these classes—ones I would never use—were going to hurt my chances of getting into the journalism school, which has a 3.0 GPA requirement. As it turned out, my GPA was below 3.0 after my first year. I had to take summer classes to raise it, and luckily, I was eventually admitted to the J-school. I can not [sic] imagine what I would have done if I were not admitted. I would have had to change my major.

**How is this fair**? I shouldn't have to give up my dream of working at *Glamour* magazine because by GPA was low—all because of some **stupid gen-ed classes that I was forced to take**. **Let's just get rid of them.**

Stacey Perk is a UI junior majoring in American studies and journalism.

SOURCE: <http://www.dailyiowan.com/main.cfm/include/displayIssueArticles/issue_date/20051013.html>

**QUESTIONS:**

1) What attitude does Ms. Perk have toward education in general (high school & college)?

2) Evaluate Stacey Perk's statements:

a) “I shouldn't have to give up my dream of working at *Glamour* magazine because by GPA was low—all because of some stupid gen-ed classes that I was forced to take. Let's just get rid of them.”

b) “Statistics and astronomy *bored* me, so I opted not to attend class and neglected to study for them. These gen-ed classes *caused* by GPA to plummet.”

3) After reading the editorial by Shilo Ellis, how would she respond to Ms. Perk? Which argument do you find more convincing? Explain.

The Benefits of a Liberal Arts Education

by Shilo L. Ellis

In order to truly discover the benefits of a liberal arts education, we must first define its meaning. A liberal arts education is a **broad-based education in which a student studies a variety of different subjects in order to gain a better working knowledge of the world around him or herself, rather than focusing in and specializing in one specific area**. The liberal arts education prepares the student for a lifetime of opportunities and changes.

As an Admission Counselor, one of the largest parts of my workday is interviewing prospective students. One of the very first and most important questions Iask them is *"What do you want to study?"* If I were to guess, approximately seven out of ten times, the student replies either "*Liberal Arts",* or just plain *"I'm not sure".* It is at this point in the interview that I reassure the student that they are most likely making a very wise choice in selecting a liberal arts college. I tell them this for a few reasons. **First and foremost, at age eighteen, most people do not know what they want to do next weekend, let alone what they want to do for the rest of their lives**.

It is a known fact that in our ever-changing economy and workforce, **the average American changes his or her career path between five and seven times, often enough, starting over in an entirely different field**. This fact alone is reason enough to pursue the liberal arts because by doing so, you are preparing yourself with a **broad enough background to enter almost any field**. **Today's employers are looking for someone who has a very well-rounded skill set**. They want people who **communicate effectively, can function at a high level both while working alone and as a team player, people who have a general knowledge base in many different areas, and who can analyze and problem solve effectively**. These, and many other skills, are found at the very foundation of a liberal arts education.

It is my opinion that the main benefits of a liberal arts education are that **it teaches a student how to think and, in turn, how to learn**. You may wonder why a student who wants to study Accounting should ever have to take a course in Fine Arts or Philosophy, but if you take the time to mull it over, it does make sense. **By studying many different areas, you are opening yourself up to a whole world that you may not have previously understood or even realized was there**. **While studying different areas that may or may not be of any particular interest to you, you are constantly training your mind to think critically in an ordered fashion, and to derive conclusions from any body of given information**. This is extremely important because in the workplace you will need to know how to troubleshoot and how to figure out the complexities of each and every unique situation. A liberal arts education will give you the knowledge base and the confidence in your own analytical abilities to successfully handle some of the most challenging situations.

In the previous paragraph, I mentioned that a liberal arts education would **teach you how to learn**. This is one of the most desirable and competitive qualities found in today's workforce. If employers see that you have a liberal arts education, they know that you have studied a **variety of topics** in your college career. Some you may have enjoyed tremendously and others you may have had no interest in at all, but the bare truth be told, **knowledge comes from previous knowledge**. The more you know about something, the more you are able to build upon it and thus expand your overall knowledge base. There is not one classroom in the world that can teach you everything there is to know about a particular subject, and we all know that most of your knowledge is gained through actual experience, but the most important thing to the employer is that you are **capable of learning and retaining new information** so that you can be successful and innovative in your workplace.

**The benefits of the liberal arts education are clearly undeniable**. By obtaining a liberal arts education, you will be able to go anywhere and do anything. You will be prepared for a lifetime of new and exciting opportunities, and when one door closes, you have ensured that another will open. You will have gained the knowledge that is necessary to be successful in almost any field and you will have been taught how to learn, so that when you are faced with a career change, you will have the necessary confidence in yourself to take on the new challenges that lie ahead.

Editorial by Shilo L. Ellis, Admission Counselor at Curry College.

SOURCE: <http://www.thehighschoolgraduate.com/editorial/BO/liberal.htm>