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## UNIT

# Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here?

Mark Edmundson

- 1 Welcome and congratulations: Getting to the first day of college is a major achievement. You're to be commended, and not just you, but the parents, grandparents, uncles, and aunts who helped get you here.
- 2 It's been said that raising a child effectively takes a village: Well, as you may have noticed, our American village is not in very good shape. We've got guns, drugs, two wars, fanatical religions, a slime-based popular culture, and some politicians who—a little restraint here—aren't what they might be. To merely survive in this American village and to win a place in the entering class has taken a lot of grit on your part. So, yes, congratulations to all.
- 3 You now may think that you've about got it made. Amidst the impressive college buildings, in company with a high-powered faculty, surrounded by the best of your generation, all you need is to keep doing what you've done before:

Work hard, get good grades, listen to your teachers, get along with the people around you, and you'll emerge in four years as an educated young man or woman. Ready for life.

- 4 Do not believe it. It is not true. If you want to get a real education in America you're going to have to fight—and I don't mean just fight against the drugs and the violence and against the slime-based culture that is still going to surround you. I mean something a little more disturbing. To get an education, you're probably going to have to fight against the institution that you find yourself in—no matter how prestigious it may be. (In fact, the more prestigious the school, the more you'll probably have to push.) You can get a terrific education in America now—there are astonishing opportunities at almost every college—but the education will not be presented to you wrapped and bowed. To get it, you'll need to struggle and strive, to be strong, and occasionally even to piss off some admirable people.
- 5 I came to college with few resources, but one of them was an understanding, however crude, of how I might use my opportunities there. This I began to develop because of my father, who had never been to college—in fact, he'd barely gotten out of high school. One night after dinner, he and I were sitting in our kitchen at 58 Clewley Road in Medford, Massachusetts, hatching plans about the rest of my life. I was about to go off to college, a feat no one in my family had accomplished in living memory. “I think I might want to be prelaw,” I told my father. I had no idea what being prelaw was. My father compressed his brow and blew twin streams of smoke, dragonlike, from his magnificent nose. “Do you want to be a lawyer?” he asked. My father had some experience with lawyers, and with policemen, too; he was not well-disposed toward either. “I'm not really sure,” I told him, “but lawyers make pretty good money, right?”
- 6 My father detonated. (That was not uncommon. My father detonated a lot.) He told me that I was going to go to college only once, and that while I was there I had better study what I wanted. He said that when rich kids went to school, they majored in the subjects that interested them, and that my younger brother Philip and I were as good as any rich kids. (We were rich kids minus the money.) Wasn't I interested in literature? I confessed that I was. Then I had better study literature, unless I had inside information to the effect that reincarnation wasn't just hype, and I'd be able to attend college thirty or forty

times. If I had such info, prelaw would be fine. Otherwise I better get to work and pick out some English classes from the course catalogue.

- 7 What my father told me that evening was true in itself, and it also contains the germ of an idea about what a university education should be. But apparently almost everyone else—students, teachers, and trustees and parents—sees the matter much differently. They have it wrong.
- 8 Education has one salient enemy in present-day America, and that enemy is education—university education in particular. To almost everyone, university education is a means to an end. For students, that end is a good job. Students want the credentials that will help them get ahead. They want the certificate that will give them access to Wall Street, or entrance into law or medical or business school. And how can we blame them? America values power and money, big players with big bucks. When we raise our children, we tell them in multiple ways that what we want most for them is success—material success. To be poor in America is to be a failure—it's to be without decent health care, without basic necessities, often without dignity. Then there are those backbreaking student loans—people leave school as servants, indentured to pay massive bills, so that first job better be a good one. Students come to college with the goal of a diploma in mind—what happens in between, especially in classrooms, is often of no deep and determining interest to them.
- 9 In college, life is elsewhere. Life is at parties, at clubs, in music, with friends, in sports. Life is what celebrities have. The idea that the courses you take should be the primary objective of going to college is tacitly considered absurd. In terms of their work, students live in the future and not the present; they live with their prospects for success. If universities stopped issuing credentials, half of the clients would be gone by tomorrow morning, with the remainder following fast behind.
- 10 The faculty, too, is often absent: Their real lives are also elsewhere. Like most of their students, they aim to get on. The work they are compelled to do to advance—get tenure, promotion, raises, outside offers—is, broadly speaking, scholarly work. No matter what anyone says, this work has precious little to do with the fundamentals of teaching. The proof is that virtually no undergraduate students can read and understand their professors' scholarly publications. The public senses this disparity and so thinks of the professors' work as being silly or beside the point. Some of it is. But the public also senses that because professors don't pay

full-bore attention to teaching they don't have to work very hard—they've created a massive feather bed for themselves and called it a university.

- 11 This is radically false. Ambitious professors, the ones who, like their students, want to get ahead in America, work furiously. Scholarship, even if pretentious and almost unreadable, is nonetheless labor-intensive. One can slave for a year or two on a single article for publication in this or that refereed journal. These essays are honest: Their footnotes reflect real reading, real assimilation, and real dedication. Shoddy work—in which the author cheats, cuts corners, copies from others—is quickly detected. The people who do this work have highly developed intellectual powers, and they push themselves hard to reach a certain standard: That the results have almost no practical relevance to the students, the public, or even, frequently, to other scholars is a central element in the tragicomedy that is often academia.
- 12 The students and the professors have made a deal: Neither of them has to throw himself heart and soul into what happens in the classroom. The students write their abstract, over-intellectualized essays; the professors grade the students for their capacity to be abstract and over-intellectual—and often genuinely smart. For their essays can be brilliant, in a chilly way; they can also be clipped off the Internet, and often are. Whatever the case, no one wants to invest too much in them—for life is elsewhere. The professor saves his energies for the profession, while the student saves his for friends, social life, volunteer work, making connections, and getting in position to clasp hands on the true grail, the first job.
- 13 No one in this picture is evil; no one is criminally irresponsible. It's just that smart people are prone to look into matters to see how they might go about buttering their toast. Then they butter their toast.
- 14 As for the administrators, their relation to the students often seems based not on love but fear. Administrators fear bad publicity, scandal, and dissatisfaction on the part of their customers. More than anything else, though, they fear lawsuits. Throwing a student out of college, for this or that piece of bad behavior, is very difficult, almost impossible. The student will sue your eyes out. One kid I knew (and rather liked) threatened on his blog to mince his dear and esteemed professor (me) with a samurai sword for the crime of having taught a boring class. (The class was a little boring—I had a damned cold—

but the punishment seemed a bit severe.) The dean of students laughed lightly when I suggested that this behavior might be grounds for sending the student on a brief vacation. I was, you might say, discomfited, and showed up to class for a while with my cell phone jiggered to dial 911 with one touch.

- 15 You'll find that cheating is common as well. As far as I can discern, the student ethos goes like this: If the professor is so lazy that he gives the same test every year, it's okay to go ahead and take advantage. The Internet is amok with services selling term papers and those services exist, capitalism being what it is, because people purchase the papers—lots of them. Fraternity files bulge with old tests from a variety of courses.
- 16 One of the reasons professors sometimes look the other way when they sense cheating is that it sends them into a world of sorrow. A friend of mine had the temerity to detect cheating on the part of a kid who was the nephew of a well-placed official in an Arab government complexly aligned with the U.S. Black limousines pulled up in front of his office and disgorged decorously suited negotiators. Did my pal fold? Nope, he's not the type. But he did not enjoy the process.
- 17 What colleges generally want are well-rounded students, civic leaders, people who know what the system demands, how to keep matters light, not push too hard for an education or anything else; people who get their credentials and leave the professors alone to do their brilliant work, so they may rise and enhance the rankings of the university.
- 18 In a culture where the major and determining values are monetary, what else could you do? How else would you live if not by getting all you can, succeeding all you can, making all you can?
- 19 The idea that a university education really should have no substantial content, should not be about what John Keats was disposed to call Soul-making, is one that you might think professors and university presidents would be discreet about. Not so. This view informed an address that Richard Brodhead gave to the senior class at Yale before he departed to become president of Duke. Brodhead, an impressive, articulate man, seems to take as his educational touchstone the Duke of Wellington's precept that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. Brodhead suggests that the content of the courses isn't really what matters. In five years (or five months, or minutes), the student is likely to have forgotten how to do the problem sets and will only hazily

recollect what happens in the ninth book of *Paradise Lost*. The legacy of their college years will be a legacy of difficulties overcome. When they face equally arduous tasks later in life, students will tap their old resources of determination, and they'll win.

- 20 All right, there's nothing wrong with this as far as it goes—after all, the student who writes a brilliant forty-page thesis in a hard week has learned more than a little about her inner resources. Maybe it will give her needed confidence in the future. But doesn't the content of the courses matter at all?
- 21 On the evidence of this talk, no. Trying to figure out whether the stuff you're reading is true or false and being open to having your life changed is a fraught, controversial activity. Doing so requires energy from the professors. This kind of perspective-altering teaching and learning can cause the things which administrators fear above all else: trouble, arguments, bad press, etc.
- 22 So, if you want an education, the odds aren't with you: The professors are off doing what they call their own work; the other students, who've doped out the way the place runs, are busy leaving the professors alone and getting themselves in position for bright and shining futures; the student-services people are trying to keep everyone content, offering plenty of entertainment and building another state-of-the-art workout facility every few months. The development office is already scanning you for future donations. The primary function of Yale University, it's recently been said, is to create prosperous alumni so as to enrich Yale University.
- 23 So why make trouble? Why not just go along? Let the profs roam free in the realms of pure thought, let yourselves party in the realms of impure pleasure, and let the student-services gang assert fewer prohibitions and newer delights for you. You'll get a good job, you'll have plenty of friends, you'll have a driveway of your own.
- 24 You'll also, if my father and I are right, be truly and righteously screwed. The reason for this is simple. The quest at the center of a liberal arts education is not a luxury quest; it's a necessity quest. If you do not undertake it, you risk leading a life of desperation. For you risk trying to be someone other than who you are, which, in the long run, is killing.
- 25 By the time you come to college, you will have been told who you are numberless times. Your parents and friends, your teachers, your counselors, your priests and rabbis and ministers and imams have all had their say. They've

let you know how they size you up, and they've let you know what they think you should value. They've given you a sharp and protracted taste of what they feel is good and bad, right and wrong. Much is on their side. They have confronted you with scriptures—holy books that have given people what they feel to be wisdom for thousands of years. They've given you family traditions—you've learned the ways of your tribe and your community.

- 26 And that's not so bad. Embedded in all of the major religions are profound truths. Schopenhauer, who despised belief in transcendent things, nonetheless, thought Christianity to be of inexpressible worth. He couldn't believe in the divinity of Jesus, or in the afterlife, but to Schopenhauer, a religion that had as its central emblem the figure of a man being tortured on a cross couldn't be entirely misleading.
- 27 One does not need to be a Schopenhauer to understand the use of religion, even if one does not believe in an otherworldly god. And all of those teachers and counselors and friends—and the uncles and aunts, the fathers and mothers with their hopes for your fulfillment—or their fulfillment in you—should not necessarily be cast aside or ignored. Families have their wisdom.
- 28 The major conservative thinkers have always been very serious about what goes by the name of common sense. Edmund Burke saw common sense as a loosely made, but often profound, collective work, in which humanity has deposited its hard-earned wisdom—the precipitate of joy and tears—over time. You have been raised in proximity to common sense, if you've been raised at all, and common sense is something to respect, though not quite—peace unto the formidable Burke—to revere.
- 29 You may be all that the good people who raised you say you are; you may want all they have shown you is worth wanting; you may be someone who is truly your father's son or your mother's daughter. But then again, you may not be.
- 30 For the power that is in you, as Emerson suggested, may be new in nature. You may not be the person that your parents take you to be. And—this thought is both more exciting and more dangerous—you may not be the person that you take yourself to be either. You may not have read yourself right, and college is the place where you can find out whether you have or not. The reason to read Blake and Dickinson and Freud and Dickens is not to become more cultivated, or more articulate, or to be someone who, at a cocktail party, is never

embarrassed (or who can embarrass others). The best reason to read them is to see if they may know you better than you know yourself. You may find your own suppressed and rejected thoughts flowing back to you with an “alienated majesty.” Reading the great writers, you may have the experience that Longinus associated with the sublime: You feel that you have actually created the text yourself. For somehow your predecessors are more yourself than you are.

- 31 This was my own experience reading the two writers who have influenced me the most, Sigmund Freud and Ralph Waldo Emerson. They gave words to thoughts and feelings that I had never been able to render myself. They shone a light onto the world and what they saw, suddenly I saw, too. From Emerson I learned to trust my own thoughts, to trust them even when every voice seems to be on the other side. I need the wherewithal, as Emerson did, to say what’s on my mind and to take the inevitable hits. Much more I learned from the sage—about character, about loss, about joy, about writing and its secret sources—but Emerson most centrally preaches the gospel of self-reliance and that is what I have tried most to take from him. I continue to hold in mind one of Emerson’s most memorable passages: “Society is a joint-stock company, in which the members agree, for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in most request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion. It loves not realities and creators, but names and customs.”
- 32 Emerson’s greatness lies not only in showing you how powerful names and customs can be, but also in demonstrating how exhilarating it is to buck them. When he came to Harvard to talk about religion, he shocked the professors and students by challenging the divinity of Jesus and the truth of his miracles. He wasn’t invited back for decades.
- 33 From Freud I found a great deal to ponder as well. Freud was a speculative essayist and interpreter of the human condition. He challenges nearly every significant human ideal. He goes after religion. He says that it comes down to the longing for the father. He goes after love. He calls it “the overestimation of the erotic object.” He attacks our desire for charismatic popular leaders. We’re drawn to them because we hunger for absolute authority. He declares that dreams don’t predict the future. They’re disguised fulfillments of repressed wishes.
- 34 Freud has something challenging and provoking to say about virtually every



human aspiration. I learned that if I wanted to affirm any consequential ideal, I had to talk my way past Freud. He was—and is—a perpetual challenge and goad.

- 35 The battle is to make such writers one's own, to winnow them out and to find their essential truths. We need to see where they fall short and where they exceed the mark, and then to develop them a little, as the ideas themselves, one comes to see, actually developed others. In reading, I continue to look for one thing—to be influenced, to learn something new, to be thrown off my course and onto another, better way.
- 36 Right now, if you're going to get a real education, you may have to be aggressive and assertive.
- 37 Your professors will give you some fine books to read, and they'll probably help you understand them. What they won't do, for reasons that perplex me, is to ask you if the books contain truths you could live your lives by. That will be up to you. You must put the question to yourself.
- 38 Occasionally—for you will need some help in fleshing out the answers—you may have to prod your professors to see if they take the text at hand to be true. And you will have to be tough if the professor mocks you for uttering a sincere question instead of keeping matters easy for all concerned by staying detached and analytical. You'll be the one who pesters your teachers. You'll ask your history teacher about whether there is a design to our history, whether we're progressing or declining, or whether, in the words of a fine recent play, *The History Boys*, history's "just one fuckin' thing after another."
- 39 The whole business is scary, of course. What if you arrive at college devoted to premed, sure that nothing will make you and your family happier than a life as a physician, only to discover that elementary school teaching is where your heart is?
- 40 You might learn that you're not meant to be a doctor at all. Of course, given your intellect and discipline, you can still probably be one. And society will help you. Society has a cornucopia of resources to encourage you in doing what society needs done but that you don't much like doing and are not cut out to do.
- 41 Education is about finding out what form of work for you is close to being play—work you do so easily that it restores you as you go. Randall Jarrell once said that if he were a rich man, he would pay money to teach poetry to students. (I would, too, for what it's worth.) In saying that, he (like my father) hinted in the direction of a profound and true theory of learning.

## Introduction

### The author

Mark Edmundson (1954- ) is an American professor and prizewinning scholar with a long and illustrious career in the Department of English at the University of Virginia. Specializing in 19th century American and British literature, poetry, and Romanticism, Edmundson is particularly noted for his devotion to teaching. It has been said of him: “For Mr. Edmundson, teaching is a calling, an urgent endeavor in which the lives—he says the souls—of students are at stake.” A prolific writer, he has published more than a dozen books including the following on education: *Teacher: The One Who Made the Difference* (2002); *Why Read?* (2004); *Why Teach? In Defense of a Real Education* (2013). His many articles are widely published; his essay “On the Uses of the Liberal Arts” is reported to be the article most photocopied by students and faculty on U.S. college campuses.

### The text

This essay first appeared in a literary magazine, *The Oxford American*, in 2011 and was later reprinted in David Brooks’ *The Best American Essays* (2012). Subtitled “A message in a bottle to the incoming class,” the essay is written in a humorous and chatty style rather like a commencement address, but one intended for a broader audience than a single group of freshman students. As we are well aware, such speeches are not always interesting. Students usually know what they will hear and speakers usually know what they are expected to say. Mark Edmundson, however, is different. He begins by congratulating the students, as is customary, but that is because he

thinks merely surviving in today's America is commendable. He is very unhappy about the general situation of the country. He is particularly disgusted because he sees the determining values of the culture as being entirely monetary and education as the enemy of what a true education should be. For this reason, he warns the audience that their successful entry into university does not mean that their future is assured. Of course Edmundson admits that America has good universities, good professors, and excellent facilities. But in his opinion, as universities are currently run, students do not get much real education. They are only interested in scores and diplomas; professors are mostly busy with their own publications; and school administrators are obsessed with the school's ranking and the prospect of alumni donations. They may all be successful by their own standards, but he laments that everybody has missed the point of true education. According to Edmundson, education is not just examinations, grades, credentials, and a well-paid job. The heart of a liberal arts education, indeed of *all* education, is character building and soul forming, and, unfortunately, most universities are failing in this mission.

Here we learn from an American professor that American universities are not perfect. That might set us thinking about the question raised by the author in the title: "Who are you and what are you doing here?" If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that most of us have not yet given serious thought to this deceptively simple question.

Today, many of us are drawn to economics, business, and the hard sciences, which seems natural in this period of financial insecurity. But Mark Edmundson obviously favors the humanities. In an essay he wrote in 2013, "The Ideal English Major," he stated, "All students... ought to resist the temptation of those purportedly money-making options... All students ought to think seriously about majoring in English"... which means "pursuing the most important subject of all—being a human being." For those of our students who are seriously majoring in English, these lines are inspiring.

Throughout his essay, Edmundson emphasizes the importance of intellectual curiosity. He strongly believes that, "Education is about finding out what form of work for you is close to being play." Therefore, he urges students to be aggressive and assertive. He wants students to defy conventional ideas and goals set by teachers, school authorities, and social expectations. These are very thought-provoking ideas. Perhaps we should stop listening to familiar voices,

particularly the voice of the market, and begin to search our minds and listen to our hearts.

A large number of Edmundson's publications deal with the subject of education, and his writings contain many ideas on this subject worthy of our attention. We recommend that you read further articles by this author. For example, in the present article, Edmundson calls students' special attention to the importance of reading. This point is further developed in the essay "The Ideal English Major," mentioned above. In that essay, Edmundson notes: "The English major is, first of all, a reader. He reads because, as rich as the one life he has may be, one life is not enough... English majors want the joy of seeing the world through the eyes of people who are more sensitive, more articulate, shrewder, sharper, more alive than they themselves are... The experience of merging minds and hearts with Proust or James or Austen makes you see that there is more to the world than you had ever imagined. You see that life is bigger, sweeter, more tragic and intense—more alive with meaning than you had thought."

He goes on to say: "Real reading is reincarnation... It is being born again into a higher form of consciousness than we ourselves possess. When we walk the streets of Manhattan with Walt Whitman or contemplate our hopes for eternity with Emily Dickinson... we are reborn into more ample and generous minds. The English major lives many times through the magic of words and the power of his imagination. If the English major has enough energy and openness of heart, he lives not once but hundreds of times."

Toward the end of the essay, Edmundson comments that he often wonders why, when their professors give them books to read, students don't ask them if the books contain truths they could live their lives by. We hope our students will not take this essay simply as a text for language learning. We hope they will "live their lives by" the truths that, they may agree, the essay contains.

## Notes

1. **Medford** (Para. 5): Medford is a town not far from Boston, Massachusetts, in the United States.
2. **prelaw** (Para. 5) / **premed** (Para. 39): Prewlaw and premed refer to university courses a student takes before entering law and medical schools.
3. **refereed journal** (Para. 11): This refers to those journals in which articles have been reviewed by “expert readers” or referees prior to publication. After reading and evaluating the material, the referee informs the publisher whether, in his/her opinion, the document should be published and any changes should be made.
4. **grail** (Para. 12): This refers to the Holy Grail, the drinking vessel (a cup known as a chalice at the time) believed to have been used by Jesus at the Last Supper just prior to his death; it was therefore thought to have magical powers. It is often used to refer to something people try very hard to find or achieve, even though it is almost impossible. The story of the Grail appears in the legend of King Arthur, first told about a thousand years ago. Arthur was known and revered for being courageous, fair, and upright. His court at Camelot was famous for bravery, chivalry, and magic. At the Round Table in Camelot sat “the Knights of the Round Table,” the bravest knights in the land. Arthur’s magical power began to fail, however, when he discovered the love between his wife and his best friend Sir Lancelot. Then the knights began the long search for the Holy Grail which was finally found and brought back to Camelot. Arthur’s strength returned and he went into battle to save Britain from an evil knight. Arthur killed the knight, but he, too, was seriously wounded. Then three women arrived on a boat and took Arthur to the island of Avalon to die. It is said that Arthur will return if Britain is ever again in danger.
5. **911** (Para. 14): 911 is the telephone number used in the U.S. to call the police in an emergency.
6. **fraternity files** (Para. 15): Fraternities are organizations of undergraduates in

American colleges, usually named using Greek letters. The members are male, usually white, and they often share the same interests and live in the same house. Traditionally they are known for their secretive ways and peculiar rituals, and opinions are divided as to whether they have a primarily positive or negative effect on the members. The term “fraternity files” here probably refers to files left by previous members, including academic papers which lazy later members could copy.

7. **John Keats** (Para. 19): John Keats (1795-1821) was a British poet and a leading figure in the Romantic Movement. He was known for his odes (=long poems expressing one’s feelings about a particular person or thing). His most famous odes include *To a Nightingale*, *On a Grecian Urn*, and *To Autumn*.
8. **Richard Brodhead** (Para. 19): Richard Brodhead (1847- ) is a scholar of the 20th century American literature. He became the 9th president of Duke University after a 32-year career at Yale University.
9. **the Duke of Wellington** (Para. 19): The Duke of Wellington (1769-1852) was a very successful British military leader remembered today especially for defeating Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo.
10. **the Battle of Waterloo** (Para. 19): An important battle fought in 1815 near Brussels, Belgium, in which the forces of Allied army and the Prussians defeated Napoleon. It was Napoleon’s final defeat, from which he never recovered.
11. **Eton** (Para. 19): Eton is the most famous public school for boys in Britain. A British “public” school is secondary-level, elite, privately-run, and very expensive. Situated in the town of Windsor, to the west of London, it was established in the 15th century. Many important business and government leaders have been educated there.

12. **Paradise Lost** (Para. 19): An epic poem written by John Milton (1608-1674) after he had gone blind. *Paradise Lost* tells the story of Adam and Eve and why God punished them.
13. **your priests and rabbis and ministers and imams** (Para. 25):  
**priest**: a person who has the authority to lead or perform ceremonies in some Christian religions, especially Catholicism  
**rabbi**: a person who has the authority to lead a Jewish congregation or perform Jewish ceremonies 拉比 (犹太教教士)  
**minister**: a person who has the authority to lead or perform ceremonies in the various denominations of Protestant Church 新教的牧师或神父  
**imam**: an Islamic religious leader 伊玛目 (伊斯兰教的祭司或领袖)
14. **Schopenhauer** (Para. 26): Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was a German philosopher. He was among the first philosophers in the 19th century to contend that at its core, the universe is not a rational place. He did not believe that people had individual wills. For many his philosophy is depressing and pessimistic, yet his views are some of the most original in the Western tradition. 叔本华
15. **transcendent things** (Para. 26): thoughts and feelings which go beyond the limits of ordinary experience 超验主义的东西
16. **the divinity of Jesus** (Para. 26): the contention that Jesus is divine (a God)
17. **Edmund Burke** (Para. 28): Edmund Burke (1729-1797) was a British politician and philosopher who wrote many works of political theory.
18. **Blake and Dickinson and Freud and Dickens** (Para. 30)  
**Blake**: William Blake (1757-1827) was an English artist and poet.  
**Dickinson**: Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was an American poet. Of her over 3,000 poems, only seven were published during her lifetime, although today she is considered a major figure in American literature.

**Freud:** Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was an Austrian physician who developed a new system for understanding the way people's minds work, and a new method of treating mental illness, called psychoanalysis.

**Dickens:** Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was a British writer whose novels made him the most popular British writer of the 19th century. His books contain many humorous characters who have become very well-known. But they also show how hard life was in Victorian England, especially for poor people and children. His books include *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *The Pickwick Papers*, and *A Tale of Two Cities*.

19. **alienated majesty** (Para. 30): Emerson once said, "In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty." 在每个天才的作品中，我们都会发现自己曾遭到排斥的思想现在有点像遭贬国王那样庄严回朝。
20. **Ralph Waldo Emerson** (Para. 31): Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) was an American essayist, lecturer, and poet. He was seen as a champion of individualism and a powerful social critic, and he expressed his views through dozens of published essays and the more than 1,500 public lectures he delivered across the United States. Emerson gradually moved away from the religious and social beliefs of his contemporaries, formulating and expressing the philosophy of transcendentalism in his 1836 essay, "Nature." Following this ground-breaking work, he gave a speech entitled "The American Scholar" in 1837, which Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. considered to be America's "Intellectual Declaration of Independence." Emerson wrote on a number of subjects. His work has greatly influenced the thinking of the American people. What follows are Emerson's quotations from which we can get a glimpse of his thinking:
- Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.
  - Don't be too timid and squeamish about your actions. All life is an



experiment. The more experiments you make, the better.

- To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.
- Adopt the pace of nature: Her secret is patience.
- Always do what you are afraid to do.
- A man is what he thinks about all day long.
- When it is dark enough, you can see the stars.
- Is it so bad, then, to be misunderstood? Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton, and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh. To be great is to be misunderstood.
- Whatever you do, you need courage. Whatever course you decide upon, there is always someone to tell you that you are wrong. There are always difficulties arising that tempt you to believe your critics are right. To map out a course of action and follow it to an end requires some of the same courage a soldier needs. Peace has its victories, but it takes brave men and women to win them.
- Dare to live the life you have dreamed for yourself. Go forward and make your dreams come true.
- Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.

# Vocabulary

<b>commend</b> (Para. 1)	to praise (正式或公开) 表扬, 称赞
<b>slime-based</b> (Para. 2)	with slime as the main substance 核心内容肮脏的, 低俗的, 充满垃圾的 (文化)
<b>grit</b> (Para. 2)	( <i>informal</i> ) determination to succeed even in very difficult situations 不屈不挠、顽强奋斗的精神
<b>high-powered</b> (Para. 3)	very powerful and effective (队伍) 强大有力的
<b>piss off</b> (Para. 4)	( <i>impolite</i> ) to annoy somebody very much 使发火, 使生气
<b>feat</b> (Para. 5)	an act or achievement that shows courage, strength or skill 成就, 业绩, 绝技
<b>compress</b> (Para. 5)	to press or squeeze something to make it smaller or so that it fills less space 压缩
<b>detonate</b> (Para. 6)	to explode 爆炸; 勃然大怒
<b>to the effect that</b> (Para. 6)	used to show that you are giving a general idea of what someone said instead of their actual words 大意是
<b>reincarnation</b> (Para. 6)	the belief that after you die you can be born again as a different person, animal, or thing 转世说
<b>hype</b> (Para. 6)	( <i>informal and disapproving</i> ) talk or writing to make people excited about or interested in something or somebody 炒作, 大肆宣传
<b>info</b> (Para. 6)	( <i>informal</i> ) information
<b>trustee</b> (Para. 7)	a member of a group of people, organized as a trust, who are chosen to manage an institution such as a hospital or school 托管人 (这里指校监)
<b>salient</b> (Para. 8)	( <i>formal</i> ) especially noticeable or relevant 显著的, 突出的; 尤其相关的

<b>credentials</b> (Para. 8)	( <i>plural</i> ) documents that prove who you are or show your qualifications or status 证件, 证书
<b>indentured</b> (Para. 8)	( <i>legal</i> ) forced by a contract to work for a fixed period of time to pay a debt or loan 受合同约束的; ~ <i>worker</i> 契约工, 包身工
<b>tacitly</b> (Para. 9)	expressed or understood without being directly stated 默认地, 不言而喻地
<b>disparity</b> (Para. 10)	( <i>formal</i> ) difference 差异, 差别
<b>feather bed</b> (Para. 10)	a bed that has a mattress stuffed with feathers 羽绒床 (这里指舒适的处境)
<b>assimilation</b> (Para. 11)	the process of making new ideas or information part of your own knowledge so that you can use them effectively 吸收, 汲取
<b>cut corners</b> (Para. 11)	to do a job not as thoroughly as you should, especially because you want to finish it quickly or save money 偷工减料
<b>tragicomedy</b> (Para. 11)	a play or novel containing elements of both comedy and tragedy 悲喜剧
<b>academia</b> (Para. 11)	( <i>formal</i> ) the people, activities, and institutions that are connected with education, especially in colleges and universities 学术界; 学术活动; 高等学府
<b>over-intellectualized</b> (Para. 12)	being made too rational and abstract 过分抽象的; 过分学究气的
<b>be clipped off</b> (Para. 12)	to be taken as excerpts from... 从……摘录下来
<b>sue your eyes out</b> (Para. 14)	( <i>informal</i> ) to sue you thoroughly and completely 上法庭告你, 不告倒你决不罢休
<b>mince</b> (Para. 14)	to cut meat into very small pieces 剁成肉泥
<b>esteemed</b> (Para. 14)	( <i>extremely formal</i> ) admired and respected 受人尊敬的

<b>samurai</b> (Para. 14)	a man belonging to a social class of Japanese warriors in the past 武士 ; ~ sword 武士刀
<b>discomfit</b> (Para. 14)	( <i>literary</i> ) to make someone feel embarrassed 使窘迫
<b>jigger</b> (Para. 14)	( <i>informal</i> ) to rearrange something 调整
<b>ethos</b> (Para. 15)	( <i>singular, formal</i> ) the set of attitudes and beliefs typical of an organization or a group of people ( 一个组织或团体的 ) 处事规则和生活信条
<b>amok</b> (Para. 15)	usually used in the phrase “run amok” meaning “in a wild and uncontrolled way” 疯狂失控地
<b>temerity</b> (Para. 16)	( <i>formal</i> ) the confidence to do or say something, especially when this seems rude or surprising 鲁莽, 冒失
<b>align</b> (with) (Para. 16)	to be on the same side in a cause 与……结盟
<b>disgorge</b> (Para. 16)	( <i>formal</i> ) to let a large number of people out of a place or vehicle at the same time 放出大量的人或车
<b>decorously suited</b> (Para. 16)	( <i>formal</i> ) dressed in a polite and formal way 衣着端庄得体的
<b>discreet</b> (about) (Para. 19)	careful and circumspect in one’s speech or actions, especially in order to avoid causing offence or to gain an advantage ( 言行 ) 小心谨慎的
<b>precept</b> (Para. 19)	( <i>formal</i> ) a rule, instruction, or principle that teaches correct behavior 准则 ; 戒律
<b>arduous</b> (Para. 19)	extremely difficult and involving a lot of effort 艰巨的
<b>tap</b> (Para. 19)	to use something or get some benefit from it 开发利用 ; 发掘 ( 潜力 )
<b>fraught</b> (Para. 21)	worrying and confusing 使人焦虑、担忧的
<b>dope out</b> (Para. 22)	( <i>AmE</i> ) to understand or find (a reason or solution) by thinking; to figure out 想出 ; 弄清楚

<b>protracted</b> (Para. 25)	( <i>formal</i> ) continuing for a long time 持久的
<b>embed</b> (Para. 26)	to make something a fixed and important part of something else 使融入
<b>precipitate</b> (Para. 28)	( <i>science</i> ) a solid substance that has been separated from the liquid it was in 沉淀物
<b>in proximity to</b> (Para. 28)	close to 接近, 靠近
<b>revere</b> (Para. 28)	( <i>formal</i> ) to have a lot of respect and admiration for someone or something 崇拜
<b>alienated</b> (Para. 30)	made to feel that somebody or something no longer belongs to a particular society, place, or group 遭受排斥的
<b>majesty</b> (Para. 30)	the quality of being regal and impressive 庄严, 威严
<b>sublime</b> (Para. 30)	something that is very beautiful and good; something that causes strong feelings of admiration or wonder 美妙超群; 出类拔萃
<b>wherewithal</b> (Para. 31)	( <i>formal</i> ) the money or ability that gives you the power to do a particular thing (做某事需要的) 资金或能力; 实力
<b>sage</b> (Para. 31)	( <i>literary</i> ) someone who is wise and shows good judgment 智者, 圣贤
<b>aversion</b> (Para. 31)	a strong dislike 厌恶, 憎恶
<b>speculative</b> (Para. 33)	based on guesses or on a little information 推测的
<b>erotic</b> (Para. 33)	relating to sex or causing sexual excitement 色情的
<b>charismatic</b> (Para. 33)	exercising a compelling charm which inspires devotion in others 有魄力的, 有感召力的
<b>consequential</b> (Para. 34)	( <i>formal</i> ) important 重要的

<b>goad</b> (Para. 34)	something that forces someone into action 刺激, 激励
<b>winnow... out</b> (Para. 35)	to separate the useful and important things from the rest of a group 剔除出来, 筛选出来
<b>aggressive</b> (Para. 36)	very determined to win and be successful 积极的, 有进取心的, 有冲劲的
<b>assertive</b> (Para. 36)	behaving in a confident way in which you are quick to express your opinions and feelings 果断的; 自信的
<b>prod</b> (Para. 38)	to push, persuade or encourage someone to do something 促使, 鼓励, 激励
<b>pester</b> (Para. 38)	to keep annoying someone, especially by asking them for something or to do something 不断打扰, 不断纠缠
<b>a cornucopia of</b> (Para. 40)	( <i>literary</i> ) a large quantity and variety of something good 大量的, 丰盛的 (好东西)
<b>be cut out to do</b> (Para. 40)	to have exactly the right qualities or personality for doing something 适合做某事, 天生就是做某事的料
<b>for what it's worth</b> (Para. 41)	( <i>mainly spoken</i> ) used when you are telling someone something and you are not sure how useful it is 不管有没有价值; 不论好坏; 无论如何

## Exercises

**I** Look up the following words and phrases and select the meaning that suits the context.

1. bowed (Para. 4)
2. be not well-disposed toward sb. (Para. 5)
3. the germ of an idea (Para. 7)
4. get on (Para. 10)
5. raise (Para. 10)
6. precious little (Para. 10)
7. scholarship (Para. 11)
8. of a well-placed official (Para. 16)
9. to fold (Para. 16)
10. to keep matters light (Para. 17)
11. making (all you can) (Para. 18)
12. to be disposed to do (Para. 19)
13. to inform an address (Para. 19)
14. press (Para. 21)
15. the odds (Para. 22)
16. state-of-the-art (Para. 22)
17. workout facility (Para. 22)
18. to party (Para. 23)
19. to be righteously screwed (Para. 24)
20. to surrender (Para. 31)
21. to buck (Para. 32)
22. to go after (religion) (Para. 33)
23. to come down to (Para. 33)
24. course (Para. 35)
25. to flesh out (Para. 38)
26. for all concerned (Para. 38)

**II** Consider the following questions when doing initial pre-class preparation.

1. Do the students hear what they expect to hear from the speaker that day? Do they hear anything unusually interesting, refreshing or thought-provoking?
2. What does the speaker think of American university education?
3. What is the central idea of the speaker's message? Do you find it enlightening?

4. Do you agree or disagree with the speaker? Do you think the speaker has given his audience a balanced view of education?

**▣ Respond to the following questions after a close reading of the text.**

**On content**

1. Why does the speaker begin by congratulating the students? In what sense does he think that they are to be commended?
2. Does the speaker think that the students' future is guaranteed so long as they keep doing what they've done before: work hard, get good grades, listen to their teachers?
3. Why does the speaker say that the students can get a terrific education in the United States, but immediately add that if they want to get a real education, they will have to fight the institution educating them? Isn't he contradicting himself? What does he really mean?
4. What is the speaker trying to say with his father's anecdote? Why does his father oppose his idea of studying law? What does he advise his son to do? Why?
5. What does the speaker mean by saying "Education has one salient enemy..., and that enemy is education"? Is he using the word "education" twice in the same sense?
6. How do people usually define "university education" according to the speaker? What is the end they have in mind when they say that university education is a means to an end? Does the speaker think there is anything wrong with this?
7. How does the speaker describe campus life? Does he think students, professors and administrators are doing what they should to make education a success in his country?
8. How do you understand the quotation from Wellington that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton? What point is Richard Brodhead trying to make when he quotes this? Does the speaker agree with this?
9. What does the speaker think true education should be like? Should it be about soul-making or perspective-alteration? What does he mean?
10. What does the speaker think are the chances of students getting a true education? Who stands in the way of their reaching their goal?
11. So what are the choices in front of all new college students in the speaker's opinion? Should they just go along and make things easy for everybody or fight for a true education at the risk of being accused of being trouble-makers?



12. Why does the speaker emphasize the importance of reading? Which authors does he particularly mention for their influence on him? Do you see why?

**On structure and style**

1. How does the speaker build up his case? Can you write a brief outline of the speech?
2. Is the text written in the formal style to meet the expectations of the audience or in the informal and colloquial style better suited to speeches?
3. Have you noticed anything interesting in the speaker's choice of words? Why does he particularly choose some words that are very formal? What effect does he hope to achieve?
4. Why does he use the following words: *to detonate, to fold, to buck, temerity, to prod, to pester, to mince, to disgorge, to flesh out, to dope out, to winnow out, impure, grail, cornucopia*? What specific effect does he want to achieve?
5. How does the speaker try to attract the attention of his audience? Does he use many rhetorical devices? Do you find the speech humorous? Do you find it powerful? Give examples.

**IV Discuss the following or any other related questions you would like to propose.**

1. Education at different stages has different tasks. If students only continue to study hard, get good grades, listen to teachers just as they do in high school, can they really become the people who serve their society and country? What do you think is the primary task of university education?
2. American universities have always attached great importance to academic study, funding the scholarship and encouraging teachers to engage in scientific research. How has America's emphasis on academic study influenced university education?
3. Toward the end of the speech, the speaker says that in his opinion, education is about finding out what form of work for us is close to being play—work we do so easily that it restores us as we go. Do you think it is a sound principle? Does interest really play such a decisive part in education? Aren't there other legitimate objectives? Don't we often do what is necessary rather than what we find fun? Given human weakness, if we over-emphasize the importance of interest, won't it encourage young people to be lazy and irresponsible?

**V Explain the following in your own words, bringing out any implied meaning.**

1. My father had some experience with lawyers, and with policemen, too; he

- was not well-disposed toward either. (Para. 5)
2. Then I had better study literature, unless I had inside information to the effect that reincarnation wasn't just hype, and I'd be able to attend college thirty or forty times. (Para. 6)
  3. They want the certificate that will give them access to Wall Street, or entrance into law or medical or business school. (Para. 8)
  4. The work they are compelled to do to advance—get tenure, promotion, raises, outside offers—is, broadly speaking, scholarly work. (Para. 10)
  5. The professor saves his energies for the profession, while the student saves his for friends, social life, volunteer work, making connections, and getting in position to clasp hands on the true grail, the first job. (Para. 12)
  6. ... the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. (Para. 19)
  7. The quest at the center of a liberal arts education is not a luxury quest; it's a necessity quest. (Para. 24)
  8. You may not be... someone who, at a cocktail party, is never embarrassed (or who can embarrass others). (Para. 30)
  9. For somehow your predecessors are more yourself than you are. (Para. 30)
  10. In reading, I continue to look for one thing... to be thrown off my course and onto another, better way. (Para. 35)

## **VI** Translate the following into Chinese.

### Phrases

1. to hatch plans (Para. 5)
2. to accomplish a feat (Para. 5)
3. to be not well-disposed toward (Para. 5)
4. inside information (Para. 6)
5. course catalogue (Para. 6)
6. big players with big bucks (Para. 8)
7. primary objective (Para. 9)
8. prospects for success (Para. 9)
9. to issue credentials (Para. 9)
10. the fundamentals of teaching (Para. 10)
11. scholarly publications (Para. 10)
12. beside the point (Para. 10)
13. to throw himself heart and soul into (Para. 12)
14. social life (Para. 12)
15. to make connections (Para. 12)
16. to butter their toast (Para. 13)

17. to look the other way (Para. 16)
18. to be aligned with the U.S. (Para. 16)
19. well-rounded students (Para. 17)
20. arduous tasks (Para. 19)
21. to tap their resources (Para. 19)
22. bad press (Para. 21)
23. state-of-the-art workout facility (Para. 22)
24. hard-earned wisdom (Para. 28)

### Sentences

1. It is just that smart people are prone to look into matters to see how they might go about buttering their toast. (Para. 13)
2. ... I suggested that this behavior might be grounds for sending the student on a brief vacation. (Para. 14)
3. Black limousines pulled up in front of his office and disgorged decorously suited negotiators. (Para. 16)
4. Did my pal fold? Nope, he's not the type. But he did not enjoy the process. (Para. 16)
5. The idea that a university education really should have no substantial content, should not be about what John Keats was disposed to call Soul-making, is one that you might think professors and university presidents would be discreet about. (Para. 19)
6. ... the fathers and mothers with their hopes for your fulfillment (or their fulfillment in you)... (Para. 27)
7. ... common sense is something to respect, though not quite—peace unto the formidable Burke—to revere. (Para. 28)
8. He goes after religion. He says that it comes down to the longing for the father. (Para. 33)
9. ... I had to talk my way past Freud. (Para. 34)
10. And you will have to be tough if the professor mocks you for uttering a sincere question instead of keeping matters easy for all concerned by staying detached and analytical. (Para. 38)

### **VII** Identify figures of speech or rhetorical devices used in the following sentences.

1. ... our American village is not in very good shape. (Para. 2)
2. ... but the education will not be presented to you wrapped and bowed. (Para. 4)

3. My father compressed his brow and blew twin streams of smoke, dragonlike, from his magnificent nose. (Para. 5)
4. We were rich kids minus the money. (Para. 6)
5. ... big players with big bucks. (Para. 8)
6. ... to mince his dear and esteemed professor (me) with a samurai sword for the crime of having taught a boring class. (Para. 14)
7. ... grounds for sending the student on a brief vacation. (Para. 14)
8. How else would you live if not by getting all you can, succeeding all you can, making all you can? (Para. 18)
9. ... pure thought, let yourselves party in the realms of impure pleasure... (Para. 23)
10. ... fewer prohibitions and newer delights for you. (Para. 23)