

Dear Catalpa,

It is summer and it is very hot today. The weatherman said it was the hottest it had ever been in 20 years, then he collapsed from heat exhaustion. Your mother laughed when she saw this; funny, she had never laughed at this before, maybe the heat had gotten to her. The AC was deafening but helpless against the torrent of heat pervading every corner of the apartment. Your mother said, it was so hot in here because I am so hot. That enough would make us laugh, make me blush; those were simpler times. It was during the Blinded Out Era, and we were listening to Trap Queen. We hummed along to the beat as it droned just barely audible over the AC. Her foot swings gently in the air, like a leaf in freefall. She seems so caught up in the song that she forgets. Forgets about her morning sickness, forgets that she's missed her period, and forgets about the accident. Even now, Catalpa, I cannot tell if she was doing it on purpose or not....

It's no longer summer, but fall. We're walking through an autumn forest, feeling the leaves beneath our toes crumble and crunch. We're walking hand-in-hand, completely oblivious to our surroundings. Your mother is staring into the distance, and I'm staring at her. Even now, she's beautiful, after everything that she has been through, she holds herself high. I watch her double-consciously, both admiring her bravery and cursing it all the same. She is still reeling from the accident, dazed and plastic. She doesn't seem to react to me anymore, almost like she's thinking of someone else when she is with me. In the past, she looked akin to a Barbie, now she is Barbie. As I think of her and what we used to be, I slam into a tree. The tree shudders and rains leaves down on us both—a shower of gold, auburn, and deep orange. I reel backwards and fall hard onto the soft ground. Your mother stands far away, looking at me as she picks leaves of her coat. She looks at me with neither contempt nor empathy; I have never felt so wistful or sorrowful.

It is no longer fall, but winter. A deep and frozen snow locks us within our apartment. As firefighters are rushing to free people from their homes and stores, they too are locked inside their station. It's like a snow globe where everything is kept perfect and the same, day after day, no matter how many times you look at it. I wish our lives were like snow globes so I too could keep reliving the same day after day with your mother. Reliving the day we met, experiencing love again, visiting Idaho together, biking together down the worn forest road, but those days are long gone. As your mother and I sat together on the sofa watching the news, I could feel the cold between us. We sat four feet apart after four years of dating. The Chinese say that the number four is unlucky because the character for four sounds the same as the character for death. That day, was the unluckiest day of all, spelling the death of our love. When we spoke, she would never look directly at me, only in my general direction. Dinners were stone cold silence, interjected with the sounds of cutlery clattering against the dishes. Excuse me for this, Catalpa, but we never made love again after that. We hardly ever touched, again. Often, at night, she would slip from the covers and stand, bathed in the moonlight, massaging her stomach. I could tell she was thinking of you, Catalpa. What would have become of you, what we would have become with you here, what could have been. Some days, she would cry softly into her nightgown. I regret what had happened between us. Everyday, I think about what I could have done better, what I should have done to keep her, what I did wrong. Perhaps in a way we were never meant to be together. She was as beautiful as a summer day, but summer passes and so did she.

Expository Essay:

This author's work was an interesting one to emulate. Tim Taranto doesn't rely on the use of literary devices such as alliteration or assonance, but rather uses metaphors and extreme detailing to draw the readers in. This writing carries equal tones of warmth and nostalgia as melancholy and regret. Examples of his writing style are "'Look', she said. 'Lamb's quarters!' She pointed out a whole patch of lamb's quarters sprouting beside a garage in the alley. 'It's a lamb-themed night.' 'My mom says I'm lucky,' she said. 'Lucky to be alive?' 'Haha no, but yes, that too,' she said. 'She told me I'm lucky to have someone like you, someone who cooks with me and spends time in nature with me. I'm just lucky to be with someone who lets me be by my real self.' 'That's the nicest thing you could say,' I said. I handed her one of the orange flowers.'" (page 79). This passage illustrates the author's tones of nostalgia and warmth. The banter between the author and his girlfriend illustrates a deep, real, and meaningful connection between the two of them, giving the readers an equal feeling of connection with them. Taranto expertly crafts a scene where the readers feel intune with the author and the girlfriend through the natural conversation. Additionally, the romantic banter between the two further solidifies the feeling of warmth in the readers by playing with the reader's hearts in a way. The feelings of nostalgia come after this passage in other instances where the author writes after the breakup. This scene, though written as if it were in the present, is actually in the past and sets up the readers to view the experience as nostalgic.

An equal emotion used and felt through Tim Taranto's writing is melancholy and regret. Instances of these emotions come up often in his writing, for example: "I swear I saw you (Catalpa) today, or at least a child like the one you could've become. Her parents walked on

ahead, as she talked to her shadow and brushed a stick over the snow. She looked up at me, and I swear she shared my complexion, my lips, your mother's eyes, chin, her thick hair. This exploding chest exploded again" (pg 128). In this passage, the author is writing after the breakup and after the abortion that Taranto allures to by calling it "the accident". He is in constant sorrow and pain after losing her, demonstrated many times throughout the book including in this scene. He so desperately wanted both the child and his girlfriend but lost both. This caused his chest to "explode", but even though it has repaired it explodes again after seeing a child that looks like it could have been his and his girlfriend's. This short passage highlights the themes of regret, melancholy, and depression with the story. He has regretted losing his girlfriend and feels deep sadness about it. He cannot get over the loss and it has caused him to lose his grip on reality as shown in this scene. He sees the child that could have been in the child of another couple, and it causes his great strife and pain. These bitter and saddening feelings are what I tried to capture in my emulation piece in passages such as, "I wish our lives were like snow globes so I too could keep reliving the same day after day with your mother. Reliving the day we met, experiencing love again, visiting Idaho together, biking together down the worn forest road, but those days are long gone", and, "As your mother and I sat together on the sofa watching the news, I could feel the cold between us. We sat four feet apart after four years of dating. The Chinese say that the number four is unlucky because the character for four sounds the same as the character for death. That day, was the unluckiest day of all, spelling the death of our love". In these examples, I tried to recreate the feelings of pain and loss that Taranto felt when he lost his girlfriend. Additionally, these emulations are all characterized by more subtly showing the readers how he felt rather than telling them outright. Taranto's style relies on showing the readers and having them summarize

how he felt rather than having it spelled out for them. I recreated this by setting the pieces out and then having the readers assemble the puzzle. Another way I emulated Tim Taranto's works is by having the essay be a metaphor for something else. In many of these lyrical essays, the short stories are all metaphors for something such as breakups, memories, emotions, etc. Examples of these are in *Megalodon*, pages 99 to 103, where it alludes to the impact of memories; breakups, unwanted pregnancies, and death. Another example can be found on pages 29 to 32 where the author talks about tattoos which he means as a metaphor for impact that people leave on us, that like tattoos, people can imprint on us. I tried to do this by having the entire story be a metaphor for breakups and the feeling of insecurity. Though this was not an easy task to emulate his work, I felt that I emulated Taranto's work very well by using his style of writing and emulating the emotions he felt and writes about within my own short lyrical essay.

Rubric for Lyrical Essayist Study:

	<i>Needs further revision</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>
Lyrical Essay: Poetic Elements	Poetic language is vague or missing. Or, metaphors or other poetic language fall into cliché territory. Or, metaphors or other poetic language are not appropriate representations of the subject matter.	Writer employs a couple of clear and effective poetic techniques, but they could be more varied. Some specific parts of the lyrical essay would benefit from more poetic language or different poetic techniques. Apt metaphors are present, but could be more specific or original.	Writer employs a variety of poetic techniques (eg. sensory imagery, description, figurative language, sound, allusion, etc.) to challenge the reader to interpret meaning and enhance sensory experience. Metaphors are fresh, original, and apt representations of the subject matter.

Lyrical Essay: Narrative Elements	Narrative elements are lacking or they are disjointed in a way that obscures the reader's ability to engage in this piece. Lyrical essay does not feel unified from a narrative standpoint.	Narrative elements are present, lending some cohesion to the piece. However, narrative elements could be further developed to engage the reader and unify the overall piece.	Narrative elements (exposition, conflict, characterization, perspective, etc.) engage the audience and lend cohesion and a sense of unity to the overall piece.
Expository Essay	Writer attempts to explain how they emulated the author's style, but the comparison is unclear and/or they do not cite and explain quoted examples effectively.	Writer clearly explains how they emulated the author's style, citing several quoted examples. However the comparison could be more thorough and insightful.	Writer maintains a focused, compelling, and insightful explanation of how they emulated the author's style, citing a variety of quoted examples and sustaining a clear and thorough comparison.
Mechanics (overall):	Writing contains many errors of spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation. Errors affect the reader's ability to understand the meaning the author is trying to convey.	Writing contains a few errors of spelling, grammar, and/or punctuation, which can easily be fixed with one final round of editing.	Writing is free from errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

Grade: B+