

School Script

We are in a lecture hall (Harrison 1261, specifically). The front of the room is set up with two long tables and four chairs set up in a row in front of these tables facing the audience. The floor is littered with 100 red solo cups. There is a full backpack sitting downstage center. The clock strikes 10AM. We begin.

Four individuals (Rebecca Klein, Zak Gordon, Chris Sanderson, and Aubrey Siebels) dressed as the ideal scholar and holding small notebooks enter from the back of the classroom, sprint to the front, and take a seat. They sit in the order: Chris, Aubrey, Zak, Rebecca (SR → SL). Pause. They switch seats to the order: Rebecca, Zak, Chris, Aubrey. Immediately they switch seats again: Chris, Rebecca, Aubrey, Zak. A long pause. Another switch: Aubrey, Chris, Zak, Rebecca. Immediately Zak and Rebecca switch seats. They breath together and open their books.

CHRIS The first in time and the first in importance of the influences upon the mind is that of nature. Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, night and her stars. Ever the winds blow; ever the grass grows. Every day, men and women, conversing, beholding and beholden. The scholar is he of all men whom this spectacle most engages. He must settle its value in his mind. What is nature to him?

AUBREY There is never a beginning, there is never an end, to the inexplicable continuity of this web of God, but always circular power returning into itself. Therein it resembles his own spirit, whose beginning, whose ending, he never can find, — so entire, so boundless. Far, too, as her splendors shine, system on system shooting like rays, upward, downward, without centre, without circumference, — in the mass and in the particle, nature hastens to render account of herself to the mind. Classification begins.

REBECCA To the young mind, every thing is individual, stands by itself. By and by, it finds how to join two things, and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand; and so, tyrannized over by its own unifying instinct, it goes on tying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground,

Rebecca scoots over so that she is between two chairs on the table. Aubrey stands with one foot on each chair facing Rebecca.

ZAK The old fable covers a doctrine ever new and sublime; that there is One Man, —
Rebecca goes through Aubrey's legs. Aubrey sits on table facing US

ZAK present to all particular men only partially, or through one faculty; and that you must take the whole society to find the whole man. Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all.

Zak sets down book, sits on table, and turns SL. Rebecca and Aubrey move to C.

ZAK In this distribution of functions, the scholar is the delegated intellect.

REBECCA *stepping backwards and sitting* In the right state, he is, Man Thinking.

BUZZER SOUNDS all look at each other. Pause.

All run to collect cups from floor. All bring cups to Chris SR, all put hands on the bottom of the stack of cups. Once all have arrived, Rebecca runs to computer and turn projector on, Zak runs SL of table and put chair on table facing C, Aubrey runs SR of table and put chair on table facing C, Zak & Aubrey step up on table and sit.

BUZZER SOUNDS game 1 begins.

GAME ONE: Pre-university

There are three stations that the scholars rotate between.

Station 1: balance a stack of 100 red Solo cups on one hand.

Station 2: build a parable about hard work by piecing together the words from classic American texts.

Station 3: scholar #1 states “I am the ideal scholar”, scholar #2 asks "why?" and scholar #1 answers their question. Scholar #2 then asks “why?” 14 more times. After 15 "why"s a buzzer sounds and all scholars rotate stations.

Rotation pattern:

- Station 1 → Scholar #1
- Scholar #1 → Scholar #1
- Scholar #2 → Station 2
- Station 2 → Station 1

If the cups fall a buzzer sounds and the two scholars in Station 3 switch roles. When the parable is complete a long buzzer sounds and we transition into Game 2.

TRANSITION ONE → TWO (12:15 PM wrap-up, 12:30 PM switch)

BUZZER SOUNDS Scholars stop what they're doing. Station 2 makes parable full screen. All scholars bring their chairs to a row in front of the screen & read parable. when they're done they turn around a recite it. Once they have completed this task they receive their acceptance letters from the backpack and return to the positions they were in at the end of the introduction and open their letters. As they read through the following, they perform choreography. Throughout choreography, move three chairs to face the whiteboard. End position: three kneeling in chairs, Zak on table.

ALL We are pleased to inform you of your admission to the university.

REBECCA I hope this letter is the one you were expecting and that it brings you the exhilaration you deserve to feel.

ZAK You were selected for your truly outstanding achievements, and the breadth of your talents, interests and potential. You are therefore invited to take part in a fresh cycle of learning – discovery, dissemination, and implementation.

AUBREY The next great influence into the spirit of the scholar, is, the mind of the Past, — in whatever form, whether of literature, of art, of institutions, that mind is inscribed. Books are the best type of the influence of the past, and perhaps we shall get at the truth, — learn the amount of this influence more conveniently, — by considering their value alone.

CHRIS The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him, life; it went out from him, truth... Precisely in proportion to the depth of mind from which it issued, so high does it soar, so long does it sing.

ZAK Or, I might say, it depends on how far the process had gone, of transmuting life into truth. In proportion to the completeness of the distillation, so will the purity and imperishableness of the product be. But none is quite perfect... Each age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period will not fit this.

AUBREY Yet hence arises a grave mischief.

REBECCA The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation, — the act of thought, — is transferred to the record. The poet chanting, was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also.

CHRIS The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it, and makes an outcry, if it is disparaged. Colleges are built on it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking;

REBECCA Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these books.

ZAK Hence, instead of Man Thinking, we have the bookworm.

BOOKWORM SONG starts playing, scholars begin performing

At conclusion of "Bookworm" dance:

- *Rebecca grab research, glue stick, and air horn from big pocket sleeve of backpack → go to computer → switch to doc cam*
- *Chris and Aubrey grab six cups and play flip cup on SR table*

- *Zak move parable chair to SR position, grab parable notebook, pen, and microphone from backpack and then stand on parable chair. **TURN MIC ON.***

GAME 2 BEGINS

GAME TWO (3:15 PM switch): university. There are three stations that the scholars rotate between.

Station 1: two scholars play flip cup. Every twenty-four cups flipped, the scholar gets to add a cup to their 'resume' stack. The winner of each flip cup game teaches the other scholars their technique.

Station 2: tells the audience a parable related to the subject of the meritocracy. When they have completed their parable they go make a list of the positive characteristics that this parable promoted.

Station 3: builds a book that lists characteristics of the ideal democratic citizen by tearing up the research that we've used to create our piece and pasting it into a journal. When they've created a characteristic they sound a buzzer. Their characteristic is read aloud and then the scholars switch stations.

Occasionally the bookworm song from Sesame Street will start playing and all of the scholars will drop what they're doing and perform a fully choreographed song and dance.

Rotations:

- Station 1 winner → Station 3
- Station 3 → Station 2
- Station 2 → Station 1
- Station 1 loser → Station 1

When the book of characteristics is complete a long buzzer will sound and we transition into Game 3.

TRANSITION TWO → THREE

LONG BUZZER all scholars drop what they're doing. Line up. receive degree from bag. return to positions that they were in at the end of Transition One.

ZAK Good afternoon president, the board of trustees, faculty, parents, family, and friends of this graduating class. Congratulations. It is a privilege to be here with you on this happy occasion.

REBECCA
Mr. President and Gentlemen,

I greet you on the re-commencement of our literary year. Our anniversary is one of hope, and, perhaps, not enough of labor. There goes in the world a notion, that the scholar should be a recluse, as unfit for any handiwork or public labor, as a penknife for an axe. The so-called `practical men' sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate or *see*, they could do nothing.

As far as this is true of the studious classes, it is not just and wise. Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential. Without it, he is not yet man. Without it, thought can never ripen into truth. Whilst the world hangs before the eye as a cloud of beauty, we cannot even see its beauty. Inaction is cowardice, but there can be no scholar without the heroic mind. The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action. Only so much do I know, as I have lived. Instantly we know whose words are loaded with life, and whose not.

CHRIS

Thank you Mr. President, I had forgotten how crushingly dull these ceremonies are. I am honored to be here and to receive this honorary doctorate. When I think back to the people that have been in this position before me, I can't help but wonder what has happened to this place.

REBECCA

Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want, are instructors in eloquence and wisdom. The true scholar grudges every opportunity of action past by, as a loss of power.

ZAK

before we get too depressed about the current state of our politics, let's remember our history. The great debates of the past all stirred great passions. Democracy in a nation of more than 300 million people is inherently difficult. On the last day of the constitutional convention Benjamin Franklin was famously asked, "Well, doctor, what have we got? A republic or a monarchy?" and franklin gave an answer that's been quoted for ages. he said, "a republic. if you can keep it" if you can keep it. So now, the question for your graduating class is this: how will you keep our democracy going?

CHRIS

Lets talk about the real world for a moment. We had been discussing it earlier, and I...I wanted to bring this up to you earlier about the real world, and this is I guess as good a time as any. I don't really know to put this, so I'll be blunt. We broke it.

Please don't be mad. I know we were supposed to bequeath to the next generation a world better than the one we were handed. So, sorry.

I don't know if you've been following the news lately, but it just kinda got away from us. Somewhere between the gold rush of easy internet profits and an arrogant sense of endless empire, we heard kind of a pinging noise, and uh, then the damn thing just died on us. So I apologize.

But obviously that's the world. What about your lives? What piece of wisdom can I impart to you about my journey that will somehow ease your transition from college back to your parents' basement?

REBECCA

Of course, he who has put forth his total strength in fit actions, has the richest return of wisdom. I will not shut myself out of this globe of action, and transplant an oak into a flower-pot, there to hunger and pine; nor trust the revenue of some single faculty, and exhaust one vein of thought, much like those Savoyards, who, getting their livelihood by carving shepherds, shepherdesses, and smoking Dutchmen, for all Europe, went out one day to the mountain to find stock, and discovered that they had whittled up the last of their pine-trees.

ZAK

For if we choose only to expose ourselves to opinions and viewpoints that are in line with our own, studies suggest that we will become more polarized and set in our ways. And that will only reinforce and even deepen the political divides in this country. But if we choose to actively seek out information that challenges our assumptions and our beliefs, perhaps we can begin to understand where the people who disagree with us are coming from.

AUBREY

*My uncle ordered popovers
from the restaurant's bill of fare.
And when they were served,
he regarded them
with a penetrating stare ...
Then he spoke great Words of Wisdom
as he sat there on that chair:
"To eat these things,"
said my uncle,*

“you must exercise great care.

You may swallow down what’s solid ...

BUT ...

you must spit out the air!”

And ...

as you partake of the world’s bill of fare,

that’s darned good advice to follow.

Do a lot of spitting out the hot air.

And be careful what you swallow.

REBECCA

That’s true.

CHRIS

the decisions that I made after college worked out. But at the time I didn’t know that they would. See college is not necessarily predictive of your future success. And it’s the kind of thing where the path that I chose obviously wouldn’t work for you.

So how do you know what is the right path to choose to get the result that you desire? And the honest answer is this. You won’t. And accepting that greatly eases the anxiety of your life experience.

ZAK

This of course requires that we all agree on a certain set of facts to debate from, and that is why we need a vibrant and thriving news business that is separate from opinion makers and talking heads. As Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan famously said, “Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts.”

The practice of listening to opposing views is essential for effective citizenship. So too is the practice of engaging in different experiences with different kinds of people. If you find yourself only hanging around with people of your race or your ethnicity or your religion, broaden your circle to include people who’ve had different backgrounds and life

experiences. You'll learn what it's like to walk in someone else's shoes, and in the process, you'll help make this democracy work.

AUBREY

That's true.

CHRIS

When I left college I was shell-shocked. Because when you're in college it's very clear what you have to do to succeed. You knew what you had to do to get to this college and to graduate from it. But the unfortunate, yet truly exciting thing about your life, is that there is no core curriculum. The entire place is an elective. The paths are infinite and the results uncertain. And it can be maddening to those that go here, especially here, because your strength has always been achievement. So if there's any real advice I can give you it's this.

College is something you complete. Life is something you experience.

ZAK

That's true.

REBECCA

If it were only for a vocabulary, the scholar would be covetous of action. Life is our dictionary. This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made.

CHRIS

Also... true.

REBECCA runs back to back pack and is surprised to find another scroll, when AUBREY sees this she quickly follows and starts searching through backpack. Meanwhile CHRIS and ZAK are pinning commencement speeches up onto the board

REBECCA

OK: YOU HAVE BEEN TOLD TO FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS. BUT - WHAT IF IT'S A STUPID DREAM? FOR INSTANCE WHEN I WAS 25 YEARS OLD I DREAMED OF LIVING ALONE - WELL, ALONE WITH MY BEARD - IN A LARGE, BARREN LOFT APARTMENT - LOTS OF BLOND WOOD- WEARING A KIMONO, WITH A FUTON ON THE FLOOR, AND A SAMOVAR OF TEA CONSTANTLY BUBBLING IN THE BACKGROUND, DOING SHAKESPEARE IN THE STREET FOR THE HOMELESS. TODAY, I AM A BEARDLESS, SUBURBAN DAD WHO LIVES IN A HOUSE, WEARS NO-IRON KHAKIS, AND MAKES ANTHONY WIENER JOKES FOR A LIVING. AND I LOVE IT. BECAUSE THANKFULLY DREAMS CAN CHANGE. IF WE'D ALL STUCK WITH OUR FIRST DREAM, THE WORLD WOULD BE OVERRUN WITH COWBOYS AND PRINCESSES.

SO WHATEVER YOUR DREAM IS RIGHT NOW, IF YOU DON'T ACHIEVE IT, YOU HAVEN'T FAILED, AND YOU'RE NOT SOME LOSER. BUT JUST AS IMPORTANTLY - IF YOU DO GET YOUR DREAM, YOU ARE NOT A WINNER.

ZAK

That's true.

by this point AUBREY has found and opened her scroll

AUBREY

As you think about life after graduation, as you look into the mirror tonight after the partying is done you may see somebody who's not really sure what to do with their lives. That's what you may see, but a troubled child might look at you and see a mentor. A homebound senior citizen might see a lifeline. The folks at your local homeless shelter might see a friend.

So, that's what building a body of work is all about -- it's about the daily labor, the many individual acts, the choices large and small that add up over time, over a lifetime, to a lasting legacy. That's what you want on your tombstone. It's about not being satisfied with the latest achievement, the latest gold star -- because the one thing I know about a body of work is that it's never finished. It's cumulative; it deepens and expands with each day that you give your best, each day that you give back and contribute to the life of your community and your nation.

CHRIS goes to backpack and start digging through it

You may have setbacks, and you may have failures, but you're not done -- you're not even getting started, not by a long shot.

CHRIS pulls out large packet of paper and shows it to the group. All look at it

CHRIS
That's true.

CUE

VOICE I am the ideal democratic citizen because...

lights out, everyone runs to set up next piece

GAME THREE: : post-university. There are 4 stations that the scholars rotate between.

Station 1: scholar stands on a table, the audio "we are the ideal democratic citizens because" plays, the scholar must read a characteristic and defend it.

Station 2: when a statement is read, this scholar can question it by asking "why?" until they are satisfied with the answer.

Station 3: when a statement is read, and questioned this scholar can choose whether or not to validate it by saying "that's true." Once they validate the statement, the scholars rotate stations.

Station 4: this scholar is taking the piece of paper that each statement is written on and taping them up around the room. This scholar must always be running. Once we run out of stations, the game our piece ends.

After ~10 "Why?"s, the "Why?" person begins running, either in place or around the room

After ~20 "Why?"s, the validating person begins running, either in place or around the room

If "Why?" and "That's true" happen at the same time, "Why?" wins out

Rotation

- Station 1 > Station 2
- Station 2 > Station 3

- Station 3 > Station 4

ENDING (sticky note on the page that starts the conclusion)

After the first sticky-noted page, the “We are the ideal democratic citizens because...” will no longer play. Runner continues to run. “Why?” begin running DSL three “Why?”s after “...birthright trip...” Validator begin running DSR six “Why?”s after “...birthright trip...” All sitting down by “...perfect body... Person standing on table reads through them, ending with “The stream retreats to its source.”

PERSON WHO ENDS IN STATION 1:

We traveled to Israel on Birthright, and then immediately spent several weeks Palestine to understand that perspective, as well. We took a semester off from college to do a journalism internship because that was more important. We are invested in American politics, and care about the future of this country and its people.

We don't watch reality television. In fact, we don't even watch cable. We certainly don't let our kids watch Disney, or go to Disney World. We would rather they travel the real world than traipse around a Westernized, commercialized tourist trap selling Americans' ideas of what other countries look like.

We achieved the American Dream
We promote the separation of church and state
We work harder than anyone I know

we are not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, we are all.
we are a priest, and a scholar, and a statesman, and a producer, and a soldier
we return from our own labor to embrace all other laborers
we are not a finger, a neck, a stomach, an elbow, but a man

we look at the matters of our wealth not with a nostalgic yearning but with the calmest of observation
we steal pens from academic conferences

we have run out of thoughts to think and sayings to say, we return to books

You masterfully combine the destruction of endangered animals' resources and the outsourcing of manufacturing jobs symbiotically with a #vegan lifestyle.

Your own brand is built on hypocrisy

You are beautiful

You have told the public to put rocks in their vaginas

we are the ideal democratic citizens because when we have exhausted our materials

we return to the simple act of living

the stream retreats to its source

All scholars exit.

FIN.