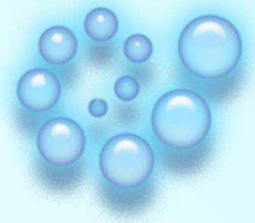


# Avatar

TeenHelp.org's eZine  
Volume 2, Issue 4 | October 2008



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## Letter from the Editors

Hello everyone, and welcome to the October issue of Avatar! We have a very exciting issue this month, beginning with a review of major world events from September 2008. We also have three exciting articles this month. The first, on mental health, is a very informative article on Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known as winter depression. Second, the third and final part of "When Nature Fights Back" is included. And last, but not least, in honor of the school year, we have included a guide to developing an essay. In the entertainment section is a review of the game Spore as well as a review of the film Pineapple Express. We wrap up this edition with self expression, which has an exciting new element of visual art and, as always, this month's horoscopes.

We hope you enjoy this issue of Avatar!

The Avatar Editorial Team

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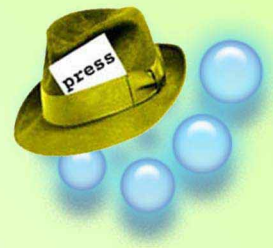
## Contact

Your valuable contributions are what make Avatar what it is. Please submit us your content, whether it be an article, poem, joke, game, photo, drawing or anything else you have to share!

Email us at  
[avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)

# The TeenHelp Times

September 2008



## By Ryan (Vessol)

### September 1

- Japanese PM Yasuo Fukuda resigns less than a year after taking office, triggering a leadership election.

### September 2

- Thai Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej declares a state of emergency in Bangkok after clashes between groups of pro- and anti-government protesters resulted in one death and 43 injuries.

### September 3

- The Republican Party endorses Arizona Senator McCain as its candidate in the 2008 United States presidential election.
- US Army troops cross Pakistan border and launch a raid in the Angoor Ada region of Waziristan.
- Japan's Kyodo news agency reports that North Korea has started rebuilding the Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center in retaliation for the US not removing it from a list of states sponsoring terrorism.

### September 5

- 500 people have died in the Haitian town of Gonaïves as a result of flooding caused by TS Hanna.
- Unemployment in the US rises to its highest level since December 2003.
- 

### September 6

- The Electoral College of Pakistan elects Asif Ali Zardari of the Pakistan People's Party as the next President of Pakistan.

### September 7

- US government places mortgage financing companies Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae into conservatorship.
- Floods in Brahmaputra river have displaced estimated 2.1 million people and caused 24 deaths in north-eastern state of Assam, India.

### September 8

- Roger Federer defeats Andy Murray at U.S. Tennis Open for a record-breaking 5th consecutive time.
- The US military is to 'review an inquiry' into an air raid on a village in Herat province, Afghanistan, after a new video evidence emerged indicating 'scores of civilian deaths'.

### September 9

- The UN decides to withdraw aid workers from Tamil Tiger-held areas of Sri Lanka.
- A Thai court rules that Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej must be removed from office for receiving payment for appearing on a TV cooking show.

### September 9 (continued...)

- Apple Inc. unveils the revamped iPod line-up including the redesigned, fourth-generation iPod Nano.

### September 10

- US presidential election, 2008: Former GOP candidate Ron Paul endorses third-party candidates Chuck Baldwin, Bob Barr, Cynthia McKinney and Ralph Nader, calls US two-party system a "charade."

### September 11

- The Pentagon Memorial in Washington, DC, dedicated to the 184 people who died in the attack on the building on September 11, 2001, is opened to the public.

### September 12

- Bolivia declares martial law following days of clashes between supporters of the national and local governments.

### September 13

- 25 people killed in rail train collision in Los Angeles.
- A mudslide caused by an illegal mine in Shanxi province in China kills 254 people.
- A bus crashes into a 100 m gorge in Sichuan, China, killing 51.
- Hurricane Ike makes landfall in the US at Galveston, Texas, as a Category 2 hurricane and destroys most of the town. Ike is blamed for 150 deaths, including 68 in the United States. 365 people are still missing in the US. Other effects include the shut-down of many Houston-based gas stations, resulting in shortages and a rise in price of gas across the US.

### September 14

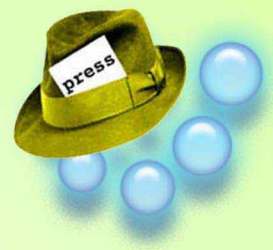
- Bank of America negotiates to buy Merrill Lynch for \$38.25 billion in stock.
- Lehman Brothers files for Chapter 11 bankruptcy

### September 16

- Russia's most liquid stock exchange MICEX and the dollar-denominated RTS suspend trade for three days after the worst one-day fall in 10 years
- The US Federal Reserve agrees to lend the American International Group \$85 billion in return for a 79.9% stake

### September 17

- Rwanda becomes the first nation where women outnumber men in parliament.
- India deploys Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter jets capable of carrying nuclear warheads in Jammu and Kashmir amidst continuing ceasefire violations with Pakistan along the Line of Control.



## By Ryan (Vessol)

### September 18

- Russia is facing its worst stock market decline in a decade mainly because of a confidence crisis rather than liquidity problems
- British bank Lloyds TSB completes a £12.2bn takeover of rival HBOS, the UK's largest mortgage lender. In response the FSA restricts short selling in an attempt to bring about market stability

### September 20

- The Bush administration asks US Congress for \$700 billion to buy mortgage-related assets to try and resolve the subprime mortgage crisis.
- 54 people are killed and 266 wounded when a dump truck filled with explosives explodes in front of a Marriott Hotel in Pakistan.

### September 21

- The number of babies in China hospitalized due to adulterated milk products and infant formula reaches 12,892.

### September 22

- Radiocarbon dating estimates that Stonehenge was constructed around 2300 BC.

### September 23

- Government officials say that the FBI is looking into possible fraud for mortgage financing companies Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, Lehman Brothers, and insurer American International Group.
- The Large Hadron Collider near Geneva is shut down until the northern spring while engineers probe magnet failures.

### September 24

- US President George W. Bush addresses the nation on prime time television to discuss the crisis and the Paulson plan.
- Republican Candidate John McCain postpones campaigning and seeks deferral of a presidential debate so that he can return to Washington D.C. to discuss the subprime mortgage crisis and the Paulson Plan.
- The Diet elects Tarō Asō of the Liberal Democratic Party as the new Prime Minister of Japan.

### September 25

- Dark flow, a new and unexplained cosmic phenomenon, is observed by astronomers for the first time.
- Home sales in the US during August 2008 fall to a 17-year low.
- Shenzhou 7, the third manned Chinese spaceflight, is successfully launched with three taikonauts, it later completes the first Chinese spacewalk.

### September 26

- Senators John McCain and Barack Obama take part in the first of the US presidential election debates
- In the biggest bank failure in American history, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation seizes Washington Mutual and sells most of the bank to JPMorgan Chase.
- A Ukrainian vessel carrying 30 T-72 tanks is captured by pirates 200 miles off Somalian coast.

### September 27

- A 12.9 million digit Mersenne prime is discovered.
- Government officials announce plans to nationalize British bank Bradford & Bingley

### September 28

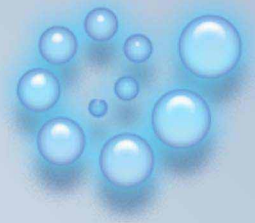
- British bank Bradford & Bingley is to be purchased by the Treasury and Financial Services Authority.
- Belgian bank Fortis NV is partly nationalized.
- Haile Gebrselassie of Ethiopia sets a new world record in the marathon of two hours three minutes 58 seconds at the Berlin Marathon.

### September 29

- The US House of Representatives rejects a proposed bailout of the US financial system.
- The Dow Jones Industrial Average has the biggest intra-day decline in its history as it drops by 777 points.
- Intervention is needed to support the US's Wachovia, Britain's Bradford & Bingley, Iceland's Glitnir, Germany's Hypo Real Estate and the Belgian-Dutch group Fortis.
- Brazil's stock market had its worst one-day plunge in almost a decade
- The Government of Iceland takes control of the country's number three bank, the struggling Glitnir Bank
- Russian RTS falls 7,1%, MICEX 5,5%, as investors sell off assets on emerging markets on concerns that the U.S. government's bailout plan will not be enough to stem the financial crisis

### September 30

- The Dow Jones Industrial Average goes up almost 500 points, following its largest one day point drop in history yesterday.
- 147 people are dead after a human stampede at the Chamunda Hindu temple near Jodhpur in India.



# Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder

**By Shaz (x-shaz-eya-x)**

Now that we are in the season of autumn and soon to be winter, and the days are getting shorter and darker, 'winter blues' can soon set in. But for people who suffer from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder), it is so much more than just going through 'winter blues'. Some people experience depressive episodes in a seasonal pattern, normally in winter, when sunlight is limited and overcast days are frequent. This type of depression is more common in climates with more severe winter weather patterns and limited sunlight, like the northern climates. Many of us notice tiredness, a bit of weight gain, difficulty getting out of bed and bouts of "the blues" as fall turns to winter. It is important if you suffer from SAD, that you receive some help with it, or if you think you might have SAD, reach out and talk to your doctor about your concerns. If you're thinking, 'how do I know if I've got it, what are the symptoms, and what help is available,' have a look at the information below.

## What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

The terms 'winter depression' and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) describe a form of depression that occurs in the winter months.

## What causes SAD?

The exact cause of SAD isn't fully understood at present, although there are theories about it. Experts believe SAD is related to a lack of daylight exposure, which explains why people feel well during spring and summer and only start experiencing problems when the days get shorter.

SAD may be related to changes in the amount of daylight during the autumn and winter. One theory is that light stimulates a part of the brain called the hypothalamus, which controls mood, appetite and sleep. In people with SAD, lack of light and a problem with certain brain chemicals and hormones prevents the hypothalamus from working properly.

A chemical called serotonin has a role in "lifting" the mood. It's thought that people with SAD may have abnormally low levels of chemicals such as serotonin in winter. A hormone called melatonin slows down the body clock, and affects sleeping and mood patterns. People with SAD may respond to a decrease in light by secreting more melatonin than people without SAD. However, medicines designed to suppress the secretion of melatonin don't stop the symptoms of SAD, so this isn't the only factor.

If you have a close relative with SAD, you may be more likely to develop it. So it's always a good idea if you think you may be suffering from SAD, that you go to your doctor so they can help you.

## What are the symptoms?

If you have SAD your symptoms often get worse in the autumn and winter when the days are shorter, and clear up in spring and summer. You are more likely to get SAD the further away you live from the equator as daylight hours become fewer. You may get SAD in the

summer months but this is much less common.

The symptoms of SAD can vary from person to person, and are similar to those that develop in other types of depression. The most common symptoms include:

- Lethargy, lacking in energy, unable to carry out a normal routine
- Sleep problems, finding it hard to stay awake during the day, but having disturbed nights
- Loss of libido, not interested in physical contact.
- Anxiety, inability to cope
- Social problems, irritability, not wanting to see people
- Depression, feelings of gloom and despondency for no apparent reason
- Craving for carbohydrates and sweet foods, leading to weight gain

Most sufferers show signs of a weakened immune system during the winter and are more vulnerable to infections and other illnesses. Symptoms usually start between September and November and almost always spontaneously disappear with the arrival of spring and the longer daylight hours.

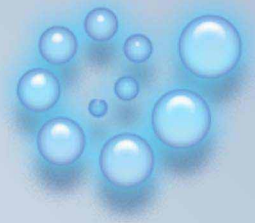
SAD may begin at any age but the main age of onset is between 18 and 30 years.

It is *always* important to consult your doctor if you believe you have SAD as it may be another condition.

## Who is Affected?

SAD may begin at any age, but the age of onset is commonly between 18 and 30 years.

Up to one in 20 people are believed to be affected by SAD; women are three times more likely to be affected than men. Younger people, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 40, are more likely to suffer.



## Understanding SAD (continued...) Seasonal Affective Disorder

### By Shaz (x-shaz-eya-x)

Because days get shorter the further north you go, SAD is more common in northern countries.

Worrying about work, relationships or money make SAD more likely. It's really important if you suffer from SAD or you think you are suffering from this disorder, that you make sure you look after yourself, and get the help that is available for you.

#### Is it treatable?

Yes, Seasonal Affective Disorder is treatable. The treatments used to for patients with SAD vary: medicines, light therapy and/or counselling.

#### Light Therapy (also called phototherapy):

Lack of light causes an increase in the production of Melatonin (the hormone that makes us sleepy at night), and a reduction of Serotonin, the lack of which causes depression. The exposure to bright light therapy reverses the process, with the additional benefit of being drug free. Light therapy has been shown to be effective in up to 85 per cent of diagnosed cases. That is, exposure, for up to four hours per day (average 1-2 hours) to very bright light, at least ten times the intensity of ordinary domestic lighting.

Ordinary light bulbs and fittings are not strong enough. Light treatment should be used daily in Winter (and dull periods in summer) starting in early Autumn when the first symptoms appear. It consists of sitting two to three feet away from a specially designed light box, usually on a table, allowing the light to shine directly through the eyes.

The user can carry out normal activity such as reading, working, eating and knitting etc, while stationary in front of the box. It is not necessary to stare at the light although it has been proven safe.

Treatment is usually effective within three or four days and the effect continues, provided it is used every day. You should continue to have light therapy every day until spring - when there are more daylight hours.

Light therapy has few side-effects but they can include headache, irritability, and, in rare cases, it can make you feel sick.

You should get advice from your doctor before starting light therapy.

#### Medication:

Your GP may recommend antidepressant medication normally used for other forms of depression, as it may help to relieve some symptoms. If your GP prescribes antidepressants, you may only need to take them during the autumn/winter season, instead of all year round.

#### Counselling:

Talking therapies (counselling) are also available, which include cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). CBT is a short-term psychological treatment that helps to change the way you think, feel and behave. Counselling or any complementary therapy which helps the sufferer to relax, accept their illness and cope with its limitations are extremely useful.



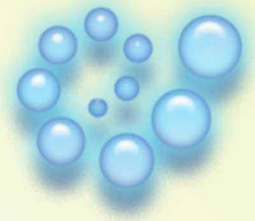
#### Self help:

If you are suffering from SAD yourself, you can help yourself too! Exercising and spending time outdoors can help. Boosting your mood with rest, relaxation, regular exercise and a healthy diet can all help. Also, if you are suffering with SAD tell your family and friends about the condition (if you haven't already), and tell them its effects so that they are able to

help and support you. You may find it helpful to join a support group. Knowing that you are not alone and that help is available can be a great comfort. You don't have to be alone with any of this, help is available.

#### Final note:

I hope this guide to Seasonal Affective Disorder has been useful to readers that suffer from SAD and people that think that they may be suffering from this disorder. Remember, if you are suffering from this disorder it is nothing to be ashamed about; go and talk to your doctor about your concerns so you can be reassured. A lot of people suffer from SAD, all around the world, help is available, you're not alone with this. Take care of yourself throughout these autumn and winter months, expose yourself to light regularly, and try and enjoy the winter months while they are here!



## When Nature Fights Back: Part 3

### Most Deadly Disasters by Type

By Ryan (Vessol)

This is the third part of the three part series dealing with natural disasters. This section will simple focus on figures, a bit macabre, but an interesting read and look into history none-the-less. Keep in mind that all death tolls are estimated as often in disasters of this scale it is impossible to find out how many total deaths there are.

#### Deadliest Cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons

*Death Toll Event Location Date*

500,000 Bhola cyclone Bangladesh 1970  
300,000 Indian cyclone India 1839  
300,000 Haiphong Typhoon Vietnam 1881  
300,000 Calcutta cyclone India 1737  
210,000 Super Typhoon Nina China 1975  
200,000 Bengal cyclone Bangladesh 1876  
146,000 Cyclone Nargis Myanmar 2008  
138,866 Bangladesh cyclone Bangladesh 1991  
100,000 Bombay cyclone Bombay, India June 6, 1882  
60,000 Swatow Typhoon China 1922  
60,000 1864 Calcutta Cyclone India 1864

#### Deadliest Floods and Landslides

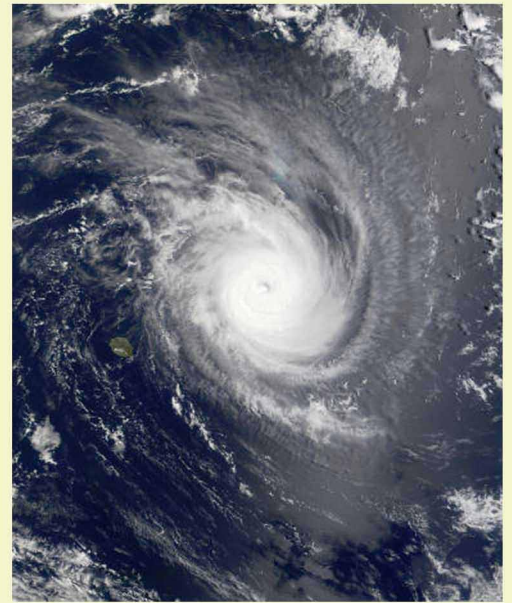
*Death Toll Event Location Date*

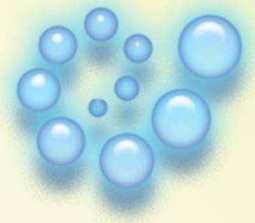
3,700,000 China floods China 1931  
2,000,000 Yellow River flood China 1887  
700,000 Yellow River flood China 1938  
231,000 Banqiao Dam failure China 1975  
145,000 Yangtze river flood China 1935  
100,000 St. Felix's Flood Netherlands 1530  
100,000 Hanoi and Red River Delta flood N. Vietnam 1971  
100,000 Yangtze river flood China 1911  
80,000 St. Lucia's flood Netherlands 1287  
60,000 North Sea flood Netherlands 1212

#### Deadliest Famines

*Death Toll Event Location Date*

43,000,000 Great Chinese Famine China 1958-1961  
24,000,000 Chinese Famine of 1907 China 1907  
19,000,000 Indian Famine India 1896-1902  
15,000,000 Bengal famine India 1769-1771  
13,000,000 Northern Chinese Famine China 1876-1879  
10,000,000 Southern and Central Indian Famine India 1876-1879  
7,500,000 Great European Famine Europe 1315-1317  
5,000,000 Chinese Famine of 1936 China 1936  
5,000,000 Holodomor Ukraine 1932-1934  
5,000,000 Ukraine and Volga Famine Ukraine, Russia 1921-1922  
4,000,000 Bengal famine India 1943  
3,000,000 Chinese Drought China 1941  
3,000,000 Chinese Famine China 1928-1930





## When Nature Fights Back: Part 3 (continued...) Most Deadly Disasters by Type

By Ryan (Vessol)

### Deadliest Volcanic Eruptions

*Death Toll Event Location Date*

71,000 Mount Tambora Indonesia 1885  
36,000 Krakatoa Indonesia 1883  
29,000 Mount Pelée Martinique 1902  
23,000 Nevado del Ruiz Colombia 1985  
18,000 Mount Vesuvius Italy 1631  
15,000 Mount Unzen Japan 1792  
10,000 Mount Kelut Indonesia 1586  
9,350 Laki, Iceland 1783  
6,000 Santa Maria Guatemala 1902  
5,115 Mount Kelut Indonesia 1919



### Deadliest Earthquakes

*Death Toll Event Location Date*

830,000 Shaanxi earthquake China 1556  
286,000 Indian Ocean Earthquake Indonesia 2004  
255,000 Tangshan earthquake China 1976  
240,000 Haiyuan earthquake China 1920  
230,000 Aleppo earthquake Syria 1138  
200,000 Damghan earthquake Iran 856  
150,000 Ardabil earthquake Iran 893  
137,000 Hokkaidō earthquake Japan 1730  
110,000 Ashgabat earthquake Turkmenistan 1948  
105,000 Great Kanto earthquake Japan 1923

### Deadliest Tsunamis

*Death Toll Location Date*

229,866 Indian Ocean 2004  
100,000 Portugal 1755  
100,000 Italy 1908  
36,000 Indonesia 1883  
30,000 Japan 1707  
27,000 Japan 1826  
25,674 Chile 1868  
22,070 Japan 1896  
15,030 Japan 1792  
13,486 Ryukyu Trench 1771

### Deadliest Tornadoes

*Death Toll Event Location Date*

1,300 The Sauria-Manikganj Sadar Tornado Bangladesh 1989  
923 1969 East Pakistan Tornado Bangladesh 1969  
695 The Tri-State Tornado United States 1925  
681 1973 Dhaka Tornado Bangladesh 1973  
600 The Malta Tornado Malta 1551  
500 The Sicily Tornado Italy 1851  
500 The Narail-Magura Tornadoes Bangladesh 1964  
500 The Comoro Tornado Comoro 1951  
440 The Tangail Tornado Bangladesh 1996  
400 Yaroslavl Tornado Russia 1984

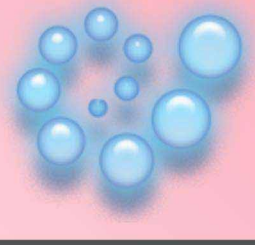


As you can see natural disaster have been a very well known part of our history, often times they have shaped the political landscape and have affected history greatly. For example the many Chinese floods and famines of the early 20th century can be contributed to the weakening of the nation and the eventual rise of Communist China under the leadership of Mao Zedong. Another thing to point out is the amount of deaths, which seem to rise as they get closer to the present, this can be attributed the vast population boom of the 20th century which added more humans in smaller areas which would raise deaths in disaster stricken areas. While we may conquer land and we may sail the seas and fly into space. In the present we can not control Mother Nature and thus can just accept it as a natural part of the world we live in.

I hope that you enjoyed the articles in the past three months and hopefully learned some things as well. If you are at all interested further in natural disasters and preparation I would heartily recommend looking into it and exploring the subject, you can never learn too much.



# Developing an Essay From Brainstorming to Draft



## By Phil (kangphil)

When reading a novel or poem it's useful to write your thoughts in the margin (if you own the book and don't mind writing in it) or on a separate notepad.

### Observations:

Explain words, situations and concepts. Write down words that are new or not immediately clear. Use your dictionary and record the relevant readings in your notebook. For anything you find difficult to understand, make a note so you can later ask your instructor about them.

### Determine what is happening in the piece of literature you are reading.

*For a story or play:*

- Where do the actions take place?
- What do they show? (About the characters, time it was written, the narrators possible views.)
- Who is involved?
- Who is the major figure? Why are they major?
- What relationships do the characters have with one another?
- What concerns do the characters have?
- What do they do? Who says what to whom?
- How do the speeches advance the action and reveal the characters?
- Do the characters do anything that causes them to change, and how are they changed?
- Are the changes good or bad? Why?

*For a poem:*

- What is the situation?
- Who is talking? To whom?
- What does the speaker say about the situation?
- Why does the poem end as it does and where it does?

### Note your first impressions:

Make a record of your reactions and responses. What do you think was memorable, noteworthy, funny, or otherwise striking? Did you worry, get scared, laugh, smile, feel a thrill, learn a great deal, feel proud, find a lot to think about?

Describe interesting characterizations, events, techniques, and ideas. If you like a character or an idea, explain what you like; do the same for the characters and ideas you don't like. Is there anything else in the piece that you especially like or dislike? Are different parts easy or difficult to understand? Are there any surprises?

### Developing your ideas and enlarging your responses.

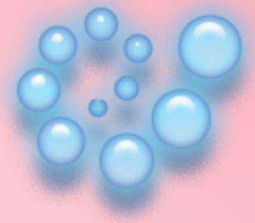
Trace developing patterns! Make an outline: What conflicts appear? Do these conflicts exist between people, groups, or ideas? How are the conflicts resolved? Is one force, idea, or side the winner? How do you respond to the winner or to the loser? What explanations need to be made about the characters? What is the nature (typical qualities) of the situations? What is the nature of the actions? What are the people like, and what are their habits and customs? What sort of language do they use?

Answering these questions and structuring them so what you have written will flow nicely from one relevant subject to another. Making notes on these questions in the margin or in a notebook will also make it easier to refer back to specific parts of the passage. It would be best to briefly go through the poem in order and write about it, then to take each subject you mentioned and systematically cover each subject in the rest of the essay. There is no right or wrong way of interpreting a text: if you can make a strong case as to why you think that from what is written, it will be sufficient. How well you notice parts of the language and aspects about the characters is more important than your overall interpretation.

One thing to also consider is the writer and the time they wrote the piece, i.e. what do the speaker's remarks about womens status mean?

# Developing an Essay (continued...)

## From Brainstorming to Draft



### By Phil (kangphil)

Put in as many details and responses as you can to make it easier to build up enough material for your essay, re-reading the notes is a good idea before making a draft. In your essay show your process of thought and expand on the notes you have made.

Your goal should constantly be to explain the results or your thinking – your ideas, your insights and your conclusions. The reader of your work should be able to learn from what you think about the subject/piece you are writing about. Demonstrate to them the importance of the topic your argument deals with, and relate it directly to the work as a whole. Remember, clarify your ideas and support your conclusions by showing that the bulk of material leads to them and that they are linked in a reasonable claim of fact and logic.

#### Layout of your essay:

Always put the title and author of the piece in the introduction of your essay. Also, in the introduction, put your thesis statement – which expresses the purpose of your paper. It's a one or two sentence summary of the argument or analysis that you will follow with. The thesis statement should include either a plan of development or a non-specific and plural word that suggests a plan of development.

I.e. JK Rowling promotes good morals by developing characters who act outrageously, by showing how people may make good choices, and by allowing good to triumph over evil in her novels.

The 3 things stated there are in effect the opening sentences for 3 different paragraphs. Referred to as topic sentences, as though stating a conclusion before the supporting material.

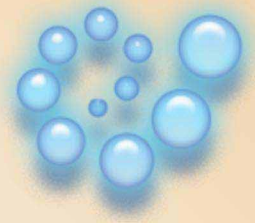
So each paragraph is:

Topic sentence.  
Supporting details and examples  
1.  
2.  
3

Topic sentence.  
Supporting details and examples  
1.  
2.  
3.

And so forth. After the paragraphs comes your summarizing material and your final thoughts, the concluding paragraph.

From this you should be able to come up with a first draft. Once you have done that, have a break and clear your head for an hour or two. Come back to it and revise and edit, as to make it easier for someone who hasn't read the piece you have studied to understand your points. Proofread it, make any little changes to the grammar or wording, and you're done!



## Games: *Spore* Review

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### By Ryan (Vessol)

When one thinks of Maxis they think either of *The Sims* or *SimCity* or the plethora of other Sim games. They are a well known company who make well known games. Unless you have been sleeping under a rock in the gaming community in the past three years you must have heard about *Spore*. *Spore*, 'SimEverything,' as Will Wright put it. You take a microbe from the beginning of life on the planet and evolve them all the way until they are a space-faring race of aliens. *Spore* was highly anticipated and hyped, but does it live up to the goal and hype brought on to it? In short words. No it doesn't. In long words, well continue reading.

#### The Good

- Detailed graphics, especially in the cell stage. Pleasant and colorful with little realism.
- It's a lot of fun the first time you take your creature from a single-celled organism and evolve them to a galaxy-spanning race of conquerers/traders/whatever.
- There is quite a number of paths you can take and replay the game on.
- The editors are very simple to use and can make some pretty neat stuff whether you have 5 minutes or 5 hours.
- The game automatically downloads user content and places it in your game. It can be fun to see others creations in your game. It uploads what you create as well. Adding friends to you're buddy list makes their creations more likely to be seen in your game, it can be fun to blow a friends creatures up.

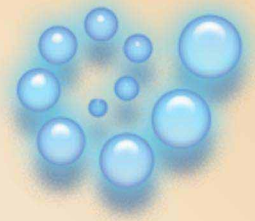
#### The Bad

- The game is shallow. It is made up of 5 different phases to play through: Cell, Creature, Tribal, Civilization, and Space. The first four are short and can be beaten together in about four to six hours. The gameplay in these stages is simplistic and lacks any real strategy or depth. You choose A, B, or C and that's about it.
- The Space stage is a mess. While billed as a stage where you could explore and play in a proverbial 'sandbox', it instead becomes a Strategy-lite game where you have to micromanage tons of things and deal with an obscene amount of fights.
- The editors, while simple and intuitive really are not that deep. If you want to spend hours making a digital creation. Learn Maya and publish your creation instead of letting it rot in the depths of the Sporepedia where no one will notice it.
- The user content has the drawback in that oftentimes you will get boring and drab creatures, and possibly 'Sporn'. Sporn are creatures created in the Spore editors that look like genitalia or similar objects.
- Way too casual oriented. Hardcore gamers will find little fun in the long run.

#### And the Ugly

- Not worth 50\$. It seems like a bunch of smaller and incomplete games shoved into one.
- Buggy. Animations can seem very stiff at times as well.
- Editors really mean nothing in the game. All that creativity and it goes to waste as what matters is the stats that certain parts give you.
- Draconian copy-protection. The game installs a problem called SecuROM on you're computer without telling you. It can not be removed unless by careful instructions. It's also worth considering that you can only install the game three times before having to call EA and having them renew your installs.

In conclusion, *Spore* is a disappointment. What could've been great and well-received by the legions of casual Sims fans and hardcore gamers alike. Should you get it? If you consider yourself a huge fan of *The Sims* or other simulation games, yes. But I would wait until the price lowered. Otherwise you will find little to chew here.



## Film: *Pineapple Express* Review

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### By Charlotte (Chazzz)

Seth Rogen stars once again in a hysterically funny movie. You'll know him from greats like *Knocked Up*, *Superbad* and *The 40 Year Old Virgin*.

Rogen plays his usual type of character in *Pineapple Express*: a lazy slob, working as a court process clerk. Dale Denton (Rogen) visits his dealer in hope of getting hold of a new, highly rare strain of cannabis, Pineapple Express. However it all goes terribly wrong when he witnesses a murder by a crooked police officer and a notorious drug lord. In the panic, Denton leaves his spliff at the scene only to find from Saul Silver, his dealer the strain is so rare – it leads right back to them. Silver and Denton are soon running for their lives.

Now, if that isn't one of the most amusing storylines, I don't know what is.

I feel a lot of people may find this movie slightly immature and a bit silly. But seriously let loose a bit and at least try to enjoy this film. The comedy script is just outstanding with some of the best comic script work I've come across in any movie of recent times. Don't be put off by the storyline, the comedy value ranges far further than silly cannabis jokes. The language is quite strong and offensive to some so if you are sensitive to such language, it's perhaps not the movie for you.



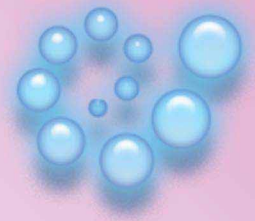
David Gordon Green, the director, completely blew me away. This guy is so young and completely out of his comfort zone but he added a level of pure genius to the film which I think is absolutely key to its entertaining value. I really do hope he takes on directing more, similar comedy films in the future.

We see James Franco, (*Harry*, *Spiderman Trilogy*) once again in a comedy role which is really nice to see. He hasn't lost his touch in the slightest. Franco plays the drug dealer, Saul Silver.

This film is exactly what an action comedy should be like: guns, car chases and a good laugh. Go out, buy some popcorn and see this movie. I can guarantee you will have a massive smile on your face when you leave that theatre.

### ***Pineapple Express* Facts**

- Seth Rogen originally wrote the part of Saul Silver for himself to play, it wasn't until the table read that he realized James Franco would be funnier in the role of Saul.
- While filming the scene in which Saul runs into a tree, James Franco became over zealous and actually ran into the tree causing him to get three stitches.
- The 'F' word and its derivatives are said 180 times.
- It was shipped to some theaters under the title "Easy Job".



## Self Expression and Visual Art

### the Bells were all ringing By Jessie.

She calls them butterfly kisses and time tower wishes,  
a little girls dreams falling into the sky.  
He, a Light in the attic, her heart, full of Static,  
she calls out for mother who knew that sheid cry.

Stained glass crosses fade to the Independence Day Parade  
when she sat on the lawn and covered her eyes.  
She's an American wonder, it's a small town summer  
and she's been freefalling since the day that she lied.

A life growing within, they claim she had sinned;  
when she started showing the Promise they sent her to hide.  
They told her donit dare believe, Holy Water de- ceives  
and she thinks life is just like a carnival ride.

In the pew where she asks Jesus to grant her forgiveness  
and welcome her home, she holds their child with pride.  
Her mother and Father, His son and her daughter,  
they lift her up into their arms as she cries.

### May I meet you one day? by kangphil

Here I lay  
Thinking of you  
This dismay  
Of not being with you

I think of what could be  
What I want I don't know  
Maybe you and me  
Nothing works so I just fall low

This endless passion  
Wanting to know more  
More than friends our current relation  
You're better than that other bore.

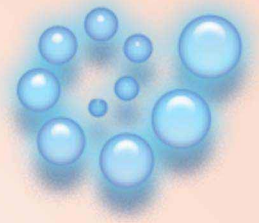
This is all I want to say  
And I pray  
Don't ever go away  
May I meet you one day?  
(But you're currently so far away.)



Image by AMBERribcage



As always, to contribute to the Self expression section of Avatar, or Avatar in general, email us at [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org)



## Here's your sign

**This month's sign:** Libra (September 23 - October 22)

Friends are there for you, and have your best interests at heart, in October, dear Libra. From the 18th, you feel like a weight has been lifted off your shoulders, and others are beginning to understand you better. Your desire to "plump" your nest this month is strong, and impulsive spending should be watched for. Nevertheless, it's a month in which gifts and income boosts are more likely to come your way, particularly around the 6-8. Better days for romance occur on the 9-10, but disappointments are likely on the 11th.

**About the Libra:** Libra, the scales, is the most cultured, refined, artistic and musical of the signs. It has a strong sense of justice and balance, and it brings reconciliation through negotiation. Libras are constantly evaluating and able to see both sides of an issue, though they can be quite indecisive. It is the sign of war as well as peace. Libra rules the kidneys and loins.

**Famous Libras include:** John Lennon, Eleanor Roosevelt, Franz Liszt, Rutherford B. Hayes, Barbara Walters, Timothy Leary, Angela Lansbury, Brigitte Bardot, Eugene O'Neill and Bruce Springsteen.

**Element:** Air

**Quality:** Cardinal

**Ruling Planet:** Venus

**Key phrase:** "I balance"

### Aries

(March 21 – April 19)

Close relationships continue to be in focus this month, dear Aries. Emotions run close to the surface mid-October, when the Moon is full in your sign. You may also see the culmination or "fruits" of a personal project at this time. The last week of the month is excellent for resolving communication problems that you've been enduring as of late. A partner is coming around, and sexuality is stronger than usual. The uncovering of important information occurs on the 1-2. The 26-27 is good for foreign affairs and education. The 29-31 is excellent for career and business income.

### Taurus

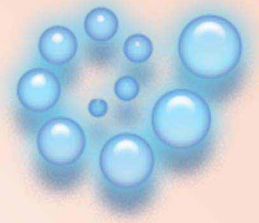
(April 20 – May 20)

Relationships heat up in October, dear Taurus. Relationships are vivacious and dynamic--full of conflicts and resolutions. You are taking things quite personally now, and something that someone says or does now can easily rile you up. A tendency to be more accident-prone could be due to stress or physical exhaustion. Rest and relaxation are especially important now, and events around the Full Moon on the 14th will certainly give you reason to take some time off. Better days for personal magnetism are the 6-8 and 31.

### Gemini

(May 21 – June 20)

Daily activities, work, and health routines step up this month, dear Gemini. Perhaps you have a larger workload than usual, or your work environment is especially spirited. While you might be busy reworking (or rewording) your creative projects in the first two weeks of October, after the 18th, the creative juices flow smoothly again. Communications with a lover or children improve after this date as well. A friend needs your help around the Full Moon on the 14th. Career and creative opportunities are strongest on the 29-31.



## Here's your sign (continued...)

### Cancer

(June 21 – July 22)

Romance blossoms and thrives this month, dear Cancer. Your special style is appreciated by the rest of the world. You have many admirers! Existing or new relationships sizzle. Your creativity is also above par. It's an excellent month for entertainment, hobbies, and play time. It's a good time to do something that requires additional bravery or courage, as some of your inhibitions are released and you are living more spiritedly. Competitive activities, such as sports or business, thrive in October. Career and reputation matters require extra attention around the 14th.

### Leo

(July 23 – August 22)

Your home life is especially busy and sometimes hectic this month, dear Leo. Arguments with, or on behalf of, family members could be part of the picture, but conflict resolution is bound to be quick and relatively easy. Excess energy is best channeled into constructive home improvement projects. After the 18th, communication problems and red tape seem to clear up, and it's all systems go. The 8-9 is an excellent period for recognition. On the 13-14, money you've been waiting for could arrive; and the 30-31 is also strong for financial matters.

### Virgo

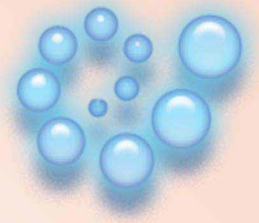
(August 23 - September 22)

Dealing with private matters and personal finances are big themes for you in October, dear Virgo. You could find that your phone is ringing off the hook, personal emails and invitations are abundant, and more than the usual errands need to be run. Communication problems ease after the 18th, and financial matters improve significantly at the same time. You'll have to deal with overspending on personal pleasures around the 6th and 14th. A stellar period for personal relationships and intimate matters occurs on the 29-31, when your personal charm is strong.

### Scorpio

(October 22 – November 20)

With fiery Mars entering your sign this month, you are making a strong impression, dear Scorpio, and you are enjoying increased energy and stamina. You simply can't sit still in October—you're always on the go. Work finds you, whether this means job offers or increased demands from co-workers, particularly around the Full Moon on the 14th. Despite this scurry of activity, much is going on behind the scenes this month, and taking a break from the routine is in order. Power days this month occur on the 1-2, 6-8, and 21-22.



## Here's your sign (continued...)

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### **Sagittarius**

(November 21 – December 21)

Your social calendar is busy this month, dear Sagittarius. Romance is private and may involve making some personal sacrifices, although your charm skyrockets after the 18th, when the planet of love, Venus, enters your sign. It's a time when job offers come to you and friends find you. Friends tend to have your best interests at heart. A romantic revelation occurs around the time of the Full Moon on the 14th. Stability in career, money, and other practical matters continues this month. The 26-27 boosts vitality and personal charisma.

### **Capricorn**

(December 22 – January 19)

• These days, you are more willing to take matters in your own hands. The ball is in your court now and in the next few months, dear Capricorn. Your desire to go after your wildest dreams is strong. New developments on the domestic front capture your attention mid-month, but professional and public matters are more in focus in October. Social interactions are especially spirited this month, and romance may be found amongst your circle of friends or in other group settings. The 6-7 is excellent for career, business income, and romance.

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### **Aquarius**

(January 20 – February 19)

Career matters keep you on your toes this month, dear Aquarius. Communication plays an especially big role in your job just now, so keep it fresh and interesting. You're feeling adventurous and desirous of a break in the routine, and you should do just that! Delays encountered with regards to travel or education lift by mid-month. It's time to reach for the stars. Romance sizzles after a few minor misunderstandings on the 9-10. An excellent period for career, communications, and money occurs on the 30-31.

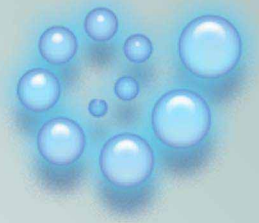
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### **Pisces**

(February 20 – March 19)

• Research, investigating, and getting to the bottom of matters are in focus in October, dear Pisces. You are especially perceptive and drawn to all that is taboo, hidden, or mysterious. Your personal stores of energy run high. A partner's affairs move forward and news about loans or taxes arrives from mid-October forward. Money might come from foreign or faraway sources, publishing, or educational matters this month. A positive experience regarding your work arrives on the 13-14; money comes to you on the 17-19; and the 29-30 is strong for partnering, sharing, and intimate discoveries.





## The wind down...

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### Acknowledgements

#### Image sources

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The Avatar Editors.

Please visit us at the Avatar page, [www.teenhelp.org/avatar](http://www.teenhelp.org/avatar), or email us at [avatar@teenhelp.org](mailto:avatar@teenhelp.org).