

1st Place - Emma
Phillips
SLO HS

As an epileptic child, I was ostracized as a mental retard, and bullied with constant derogatory taunts. However, I found animals therapeutic, their presence calming. I spent hours stroking stray cats and catching tadpoles. When I was eight years old, I began attending Partners in Animal Welfare Services. This camp paired low income and foster children with animal shelter dogs in a mutualistic relationship. I did not mind the fact that the camp took place in the desperately underfunded county animal shelter, adjacent to the jail. The facility was decrepit, overcrowded, and the pervasive stench was nauseating. Lacking sufficient funds and space, the facility was forced to euthanize nearly 100 animals daily. Yet as a child, I did not mind the rusty cages or constant smell. I was simply enthralled with the idea that if I trained the mutt assigned to me, if I taught him to sit, fetch, and roll over, he might be adopted; he might escape death.

When I turned thirteen, the head of staff, asked me to volunteer. I was overjoyed, yet woefully unprepared. I had no idea of the twelve hour summer days which awaited me, scrambling to make the improbable possible. My naïve love of the shelter quickly dissolved, as I watched dogs disappear from their kennels overnight, never to reemerge. I realized our purpose in educating the youth on preventing pet overpopulation was of paramount importance. We empowered these children by putting another life in their hands. Yet Grayson was different, and his life was one whose fate I was forced to decide.

One especially hot July afternoon, I was working with Julia, a meek ten year old as she attempted to coax Grayson, a stout pit-bull who had been adopted and returned countless time, to sit. The young girl had promised me at the beginning of the week that she would get Grayson, "dopted", as she liked to say. However, as the days wore on, she became exasperated, and it seemed as though her every effort to tame the beast was futile. She tugged at his leash, coaxed him with treats, whistled, clapped, she tried everything to simply get him to sit. Perhaps it was the heat, exhaustion, or a simply annoyance, but as Julia pulled at Grayson's leash once more, he turned on her, lunged, and bit.

In that moment, I was crushed. The protocol at animal services is for any dog that bites a person to be euthanized. As tears streamed down Julia's face, and blood from her wound, she blubbered, "He didn't mean it. He didn't." Other staff members came up to me and whispered that they were sure it was an isolated incident, they begged me not to report it, to quietly clean Julia's wound and then turn a blind eye. In that moment, I recalled a message that I learned at the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards a few months earlier. A charm of the fourfold path was buried in my pocket, and I took it out as I pondered my next step. I glanced from the silver charm to Grayson, and then to Julia, and an internal battle of tumult began.

I realized the truthful thing to do would be file a bite report. I knew that it was only fair, for if Grayson bit again in the future, it would be on my conscience. I found the next question more difficult, as it would not likely build good will between myself and my staff, but I knew in my heart of hearts that it would cultivate good will between Animal Services and the community, and it was my responsibility to serve as a protector of public's safety. The last question truly tore at me, as I knew that Grayson would be euthanized, and that, most certainly, would not be beneficial to him. Yet I had to think of all, I had to think of all the people who might be hurt if he was to repeat his aggressive behavior. As I proceeded through the four way test, I reached my conclusion. It was not popular, and I did not relish handing in the report to the kennel director, but I knew that I had done the only thing I could in that difficult instance. The four way test guided me one way, the right way.

2nd Place
Natalie Brescia
Mission Prep

The 4-Way Test During the Day

Rubbing my eyes the window shades came into view. The sun was barely peeking through the crack of the green drapes. Morning time. My alarm was incessantly blaring its song of wakefulness. I reached over and silenced its complaining then rolled back to the same position. As I stared at the bumpy tan texture of the ceiling, the thought of sleeping for a little longer crossed my mind. "I could go in late to school just this once," I mused. Picturing myself sprawled out in the sun while my other classmates were slumped in the rigid desks tickled a slight smile out of me. "I can't stay home today," I whispered to myself as I slowly emerged from the warmth of my comforter, like a bear crawling out of its dark cave. "My classmates have to go and I need to go as well," I confessed, "plus Mom will never believe that I am not feeling well. I'm not being honest or fair." I sneak a look at the clock. 6:15am. Walking over to my desk, I filled my backpack, seemingly with bricks, and got dressed.

As I locked the front door the chill of the morning air sneaked under my scarf. I briskly walked to the car and opened the door quickly to deposit my backpack. The Mazda roared to life and I pulled away from the house. Merging onto the 101 a black Ford F150 swerved in front of me. As I threw on the breaks, my backpack flew off the seat and my English breakfast tea spilled down the seat. The burn of my morning drink seeped through my jeans. As my frustration rose so did the temptation to lay on the horn. "Who does he think he is?" I blurted out loud to myself. I grabbed some crumpled napkins my mom snagged from Chipotle out of the

glove compartment. Feeling less irritated I considered, "I can't blame him. He might be having a rough morning and my bantering would not make anything better. My wrath would not be beneficial in this situation." Gripping the steering wheel I continued south.

School ran on its usual schedule like an old grandfather clock. One cog, however, seemed to be missing. Papers and pens and pencils were scattered everywhere as I sauntered down the hallway. "How unusual," I pondered, "did someone spill their backpack?" I continued to walk with the crowd over the haphazard zone to the end of the hallway. "I should pick those up. Someone could trip and it looks terrible. It will be helpful to the person who spilled," I resolved as I changed course. Kneeling down half perplexed I started to collect strewn the items while hurried legs bumped against me. After all the items were gathered I comprised them into a neat pile. The bell blared and mocked me. I was late for English, but Mrs. Hamm will not mind if I tell her what happened.

With three o'clock nearing all of period G was getting squirmy. I found myself succumbing to the squirminess. Outside the sky was pale blue with a spattering of stratus clouds. I focused my gaze from the window to across the room. Alex was taunting me with wide eyes and contorted facial expressions. The urge to giggle was overwhelming me like an expanding helium balloon about to explode. "I need to focus. Hosseini uses the haphazard narration to depict the chaotic nature of the event. That's a good start," I supposed. "If I calm down maybe Alex will too and then we can focus on the assignment. That will be beneficial to us all." The energy in the room leveled out. The bell rang and everyone filed on out to freedom.

Settling down in the back of the classroom I pulled out my AP Calculus homework. The oversized 'S' shaped symbol in front of the function with random

letters looked like a cryptic code dating back to the reign of the Egyptians. I jotted down the problems and tried to decode the secret language of the math gods.

Twenty minutes passed and I was still stuck. "I could write down the odd answers are in the back of the textbook then I wouldn't have to worry. What day is it?

Tuesday? Mrs. Crow has tutoring on Tuesdays, right?" I contemplated as I slumped in the desk similarly to how I imagined my classmates in the morning. "I need to learn the material and work through the problems. It is the honest and constructive thing to do." Treading down the hallway I could feel the dull pain in my brain already intensifying.

Unloading the unwanted weight from my backpack into my locker, I prepared for the journey home. I passed the office and glided out the swinging doors and found the Mazda waiting patiently for me. Traffic was light and I made it home rather quickly. I walked in the front door and sauntered into the kitchen. My bowl with oatmeal remains was still in the sink. "I could tell Mom that it isn't mine or just leave it in the sink," I deviously ruminated. "No, I will clean it. That is not honest or fair or helpful or beneficial to her." The hot water ran over my hands and cleansed the bowl of its impurities. Placing the bowl in the dishwasher, I lugged myself upstairs. The comforter beckoned me to slumber. My eyes closed. The loop of the day ran in my head like a movie. This seemingly ordinary day could have immensely impacted those around me if I had acted differently. I thought about the possible reactions my mom, the driver, the night cleaners at school, and my teachers would have had. In some manner we all would have been different, and not necessarily for the better. Acting truthfully, fairly, with goodwill, and in constructive manner was the best possible way to go through my day.

3rd Place
Annabel Scott - Mission
Prep

For my essay, I spent an average day thinking about the four questions that were presented to me. I couldn't really decide what to focus on until I walked down to a group of girls I know during lunch time and heard them gossiping about another girl that goes to our school that doesn't have many friends. Usually I would sit quietly and not involve myself, or sometimes I would even laugh at the jokes. This day was different than usual though, because of these questions I was asked to write about.

The first question asks weather "it is the truth?". At first I listened to what the girls were gossiping about. Some of the things that they were saying could have been true, but most I knew were rumors and hurtful things that were only spread to make people laugh. So, I realized at this point that this wasn't all the truth, and these lies were very hurtful lies.

I then considered the next question, "is it fair to everyone?". I knew for a fact that it wasn't fair to the girl that was being spoken about, because she was not there to defend herself, and was also having lies told about her that were obviously fake. I also knew that this was not fair to the people that hear the lies and believe that they are real.

The next question asked "will it build goodwill and better friendships?". This answer was obviously a no. Gossiping is not a good thing because it can be hurtful, but it is equally as bad to build friendships off of gossiping. To take your free lunch hour and spend it speaking badly about another person can only result in a negative consequence, which I had never really thought about before, and I'm sure many of the girls participating in the gossiping had not either.

The last question asked is "will it be beneficial to all concerned". This could not be beneficial in any way. All I could see stemming off this group of girls as I observed was hate and carelessness for another person's emotions. I had not yet thought of it this way, and today I decided to change the subject to something more positive after thinking about the situation in this light.

The four question test actually fit perfectly into my ordinary day and helped me to realize how unfair it is for me to speak badly about a

3rd Place

person, but then also be upset and hurt when someone speaks badly about me. It was a perfect essay topic, and was an eye opener.