PORTFOLIO INTRODUCTION—SPRING

“This isn’t Core class!”
Keriann Conley
Warsaw, IN

It is all Core's fault that now I can't think about a complex issue without subconsciously thinking to myself, “what's the next question?” After thinking this, I automatically think to myself, “Keriann! What are you doing? This isn’t Core class!” But I honestly can't help it. That is what Core has done for me (or to me), it has made me take an issue or book or essay and really pick it apart. Before Core, I would think about an issue just for the amount of time that it was required to think about, for example, just in that class period or just for that paper. Now, I find myself thinking, even days later, if Andy Beckett (Tom Hanks) really should have told his bosses that he was gay man infected with AIDS. Although I still haven't been able to answer that question to my satisfaction, it amazes me that I am still thinking about it. Before Core I think that I would have just watched the movie and dismiss it as “just another movie.” Which is not to say that it wasn’t a good movie, because I thought it was. My point, though, is that I would never be thinking about a movie and asking myself
questions days after watching it. Core has done this to me. But, it could have been worse. Plus, those great classroom discussions helped me develop ideas for my papers.

My first paper was about love. I remember sitting in class and listening to someone talking about how Agape fit into the story of Beauty and the Beast. After hearing that I started thinking about what Paul wrote and asking myself if that would fit into the issues in that fairy tale. I had been hearing those Bible verses from Corinthians since I was a little girl in Sunday school, but it would have never occurred to me that Paul’s thoughts could be compared to Beauty and the Beast. That’s what I did though, I took a classic fairy tale and compared it to the Bible. To some Christians that may seem a bit unorthodox, to me it was really interesting, though, because I started to read Paul’s words to the church in Corinth from a new aspect, and every single aspect that Paul discussed was very much a part of Beauty and the Beast. It was almost funny as I compared Beast’s love for Beauty to the Bible passages I have had memorized since I was seven. Sunday school would have been much more fun if I could have been comparing things to one of my favorite Disney movies! My peer group helped me think of even more ways to show the similarities of what Paul writes about and the events that occur in Beauty and the Beast.

I must also admit that I was not crazy about the
idea of a peer group. I liked my papers just how they were, in the beginning. After my peer group got together and we started reading what we had to say about each others' papers, I thought, "hey, this might be ok." It was more than ok, and I have grown to respect the opinion of each and every person in my peer group. The comments that they made, although sometimes harsh, helped me so much. My peer's comments especially helped me in writing the worker profile. They were great! My peer group and I shared many laughs as well as getting stuff done. I honestly enjoyed hearing their comments about my papers. By the third paper we knew each other really well and I felt that we had a fairly good grasp on each others writing styles so we had fun "making fun" of the weaknesses in each others papers. I feel that my peer group was extremely beneficial and I know that my papers would not have been nearly as good without their help.

The worker profile was not something that I thought I would enjoy, but I think that it helped me learn a lot about teaching high school. Eight to ten pages seemed like a daunting task when I first started writing; I had no idea how I could possibly write that much about one teacher. As it turned out, I had more than enough things to write about. Interviewing Mrs. Chastain was really fun. She is a great role model and writing about her views and finding
research to either support her claims or argue against her claims was really interesting.

The third paper that we wrote was by far my favorite to write. I wrote about Jimmy Blevins death through the eyes of the guard that pulled the trigger and killed Blevins. My original idea was to write this part of All the Pretty Horses from Blevins perspective but it was important to me to keep Cormac McCarthy’s writing style and I didn’t feel that I had enough to tell it from Jimmy’s perspective without letting reader know his inner thoughts. So, I simply switched the guard and I’m so glad that I did! It was cool to use some of my Spanish skills in my Core paper, and since the guard was Mexican, I thought that he should speak Spanish.

The papers and peer groups are not the only thing I have gained from Core. I have, in a way, gained a new perspective on life. Core has taught me that it is okay to raise questions and to bring up an issue in a book or story even if it is a little “off.”

I have also noticed that throughout this semester of Core that my comfort level has increased. The first day of class I was scared to answer a question because I was afraid that I might be wrong, now I just seem to say things without thinking and hope for the best. I find now that it works best that way because that is when the most interesting ideas
come out. The sentences that start out with, "I think this wrong..." sometimes bring up the best issues. That's what Core is about, becoming comfortable raising questions and then knowing that what you say may be critiqued by your professor or classmates but also knowing that what you think or say raises greater and more complex issues as well. Core has helped me become more comfortable saying what I have to say without feeling silly, and to me that is one of life's important lessons.