

The Value of Life

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MODULE: STUDENT VERSION

Reading Selections for This Module

A Human Life Value Calculator. Web.

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Jobs, Steve. Commencement Address. Stanford University Commencement Weekend. Stanford, CA. 12 June 2005. Address. <<http://news.stanford.edu/news/2005/june15/jobs-061505.html>>.

Jones, Chris. "Roger Ebert: The Essential Man." *Esquire* 16 Feb. 2010. Web.

Ripley, Amanda. "What Is a Life Worth?" *Time* 11 Feb. 2002. 22-27. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Act III, Sc. 1: Hamlet's "To be, or not to be" soliloquy.

Reading Rhetorically

Prereading

Activity 1: Getting Ready to Read Packet Item (Quickwrite)

Before you read what others say about the value of life, take a few minutes to respond in writing to the following quickwrite prompt:

What does being alive mean to you? How do you assign value to life? What makes life challenging? What makes it worth living? Describe a few examples that help show your thinking about how people should value life.

Activity 2: Exploring Key Concepts

This activity will help you build your understanding of the many meanings suggested by the concept of “life.” Use the model below to explore the ways in which society defines “life” in various contexts.

Model Concept Map	
Concept:	Sentence:
Synonyms:	Contexts:
Examples:	Non-Examples:

Text—“Hamlet’s Soliloquy”

Activity 3: Surveying the Text

The first text you will read is the famous “To be, or not to be” speech from Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*, which was published in 1604 under the title *The Tragical Historie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke*. That speech is a soliloquy, a convention used by playwrights to allow the audience to hear the thoughts of a character. Take a few moments to look over the text, and then answer the following questions:

1. What prior experiences have you had reading plays?
2. What did you notice about the page format and annotations?
3. What did you notice about the text’s structure?

Activity 4: Making Predictions and Asking Questions

When approaching a new text, you should always try to draw on your prior experiences to help you predict what the text might be about. The following questions will help you do so:

1. What is a tragedy? What themes and outcomes would you expect to find in a tragedy?
2. What do you know about the language in plays written by Shakespeare?
3. What have you done in the past to help yourself read Shakespeare effectively?
4. The soliloquy here begins with a famous quotation: “To be, or not to be—that is the question.” What do you think is “the question” Hamlet is asking? How do you think he might answer it?

Activity 5: Understanding Key Vocabulary (Looking at the Text)

Shakespeare's texts are often difficult because he uses words that are no longer in frequent use, even though they were common when he wrote his plays. Several words in Hamlet's soliloquy fit into this category. You will see in the text that some words are marked with an asterisk (*); a definition or synonym is provided to the right of the line for those words.

Polar Opposites

An important rhetorical device Shakespeare uses in Hamlet's soliloquy is antithesis, or a balance of opposites. Hamlet explores a series of oppositional relationships in his speech, beginning with the question of "to be, or not to be." For this vocabulary activity, you will explore some of these antithetical relationships by brainstorming antonyms for the terms listed below.

Term	Antonym
oppression	
action	
endurance	
mystery	
life	

Word Families

List as many words as possible that are related to the following five concepts from Hamlet's soliloquy:

1. action
2. thought
3. suffering
4. mortality
5. fear

You may include synonyms directly from the text along with any other words you believe are related to the concept. Word families are not simply lists of synonyms; they may include any sets of words that frequently appear together. For example, "brackish" and "water" are part of the same word family.

Example:

resolution: end (line 5), consummation (line 8), will (line 25), decision, outcome, and result

Term	Word Family
action	
thought	
suffering	
mortality	
fear	

Reading

Activity 6: First Reading (Oral)

Read the soliloquy from *Hamlet*. Although it is quite short, it packs much meaning into its 33 lines. You may need to read it more than once before you feel you have a good grasp of the ideas it contains.

Background

At this point in the play, Hamlet feels that he is in a crisis. His father died a few months earlier under mysterious circumstances. Hamlet discovers that his father was secretly murdered—by Hamlet’s uncle, Claudius. Making things even worse, Claudius then marries Hamlet’s mother. Hamlet does not know what to do about this knowledge. He wonders whether he can trust anyone or if perhaps he is going crazy.

As you first read the text, focus on what you see as the “big picture” Hamlet describes. Based on this first reading, would you say that Hamlet is an optimist or a pessimist? What are your reasons for thinking so?

Activity 7: Considering the Structure of the Text Packet Item

Look again at the structure of Hamlet's soliloquy. Then answer the following questions with a small group or partner about how this speech is organized:

1. Where does Hamlet ask the central question of his soliloquy?
2. Where does he restate this question in greater detail?
3. Does Hamlet ever answer this question?
4. Does he ask any other questions in this speech?
5. Who or what interrupts Hamlet at the end of his soliloquy? Do you think he was finished talking?

Activity 8: Noticing Language

Identify the main clause (subject and verb) in the following sentence. Then paraphrase the main idea of this sentence in your own words: "For in that sleep of death what dreams may come / When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, / Must give us pause."

Activity 9: Annotating and Questioning the Text

Because this series of texts focuses on the way people value life, you will now need to take a second look at the soliloquy. This time, read the text with a yellow highlighter or colored pencil (or devise some other way of marking the text in a unique and easily recognizable way), marking the places in the text where Hamlet describes what it means to be alive.

Example: In lines 2-3, Hamlet says life is “To suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,” so you could highlight that phrase as an example of what Hamlet thinks it means “to be.”

Characterizing the Text

Take a look at the parts of the soliloquy you have highlighted, and compare them with a classmate’s markings.

Find a few examples that you both have highlighted, and mark the examples with a “+” or “-” to indicate whether the examples show a positive (+) outlook on life or a negative (-) one.

For the example above (“the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”), you would mark a “-” because it compares being alive to being under attack.

After you have marked several such examples, reflect on the question asked earlier: At this moment, does it seem as if Hamlet is an optimist or a pessimist?

Activity 10: Analyzing Stylistic Choices

Continuing to work with your partner, identify three figures of speech Hamlet uses to express himself. These could include metaphors or personification. Remember, a metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two unlike items without using the words “like” or “as” while personification gives human characteristics to a non-human. For instance, when Hamlet calls whatever happens after death “the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns,” he’s metaphorically comparing the mysteries of the afterlife to dangerous, uncharted lands—something explorers from Shakespeare’s time period were deeply interested in. Use your annotations from Activity 7 to find more figures of speech.

Next, paraphrase these figures of speech. “Paraphrasing” means putting the ideas of another writer into your own words. Again using the “slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” metaphor, a paraphrase might sound something like this: “Hamlet compares being alive to having fate shoot arrows at him.” As you paraphrase, pay attention to the style used by Shakespeare to convey his ideas.

What is the difference between having Hamlet say that life is like “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune” and having him just say, “Life isn’t very pleasant”? What are the effects of Shakespeare’s stylistic choices as a writer?

Postreading

Activity 11: Summarizing Packet Item

Use your annotations to answer the following questions:

- What is the big issue in Hamlet's soliloquy?
- What claim or argument about the value of life does Hamlet make?
- What do you think about the Hamlet's claim?

At this point, you may jot quick, but complete, answers to these questions in your notes. Later, you'll use these responses to begin completing a graphic organizer comparing all the reading selections you'll analyze for this module.

(See the handout, "Charting Claims Across Multiple Texts".)

Activity 12: Thinking Critically

We identified the genre earlier as drama, but more specifically, this is a soliloquy. As noted earlier, a soliloquy is a dramatic convention that allows a character to speak aloud his or her thoughts. From your reading of the soliloquy, record your answers to the following questions:

1. Does the soliloquy form seem to favor the expression of emotion (pathos) or logic (logos)? Explain your answer.
2. Does Hamlet's soliloquy use emotion (pathos) to create a specific effect on the reader? If so, describe how emotion is used.
3. Does Hamlet's soliloquy use logic (logos) to create specific effects on the reader? If so, describe how the logic is used.
4. When Hamlet speaks his soliloquy, he is in crisis. How do his circumstances position Hamlet to speak with authority (ethos) about the value of life? Does Hamlet seem to be speaking about his life in particular or about the quality of life in general?
5. As careful readers, we are, of course, aware that it is not really Hamlet speaking, but a character created by Shakespeare. Does Shakespeare seem like someone whose opinions and attitudes are worth considering? Why?

Activity 13: Charting Multiple Texts

Take a look at the chart constructed for this assignment. It is a “graphic organizer”—a device that helps you keep track of various pieces of information and the relationships among those pieces. Because the chart is rather small and you will be doing a lot of writing on it, you might want to get a larger piece of paper and create your own chart. The chart will prove especially useful in the writing assignment you will complete at the end of this module.

As you look down the side of the chart, you will see that it asks you for information about the different texts you will be reading in this assignment:

- Title
- Author
- Genre

The title and author are self-explanatory. “Genre” means “type,” so you are asked to describe the type of writing. For this first text, you would put “Drama” or “Play” as the genre.

Across the top of the chart are the ideas you will be tracking as you read the texts in this module. They are presented in the form of questions:

- What is the text’s big issue?

Here you will identify the “main idea” of the text.

- What claim does the text make?

This asks you to identify the writer’s perspective on the main idea.

- What are examples or quotes from the text?

This is where you would put examples given by the writer to help the reader understand his or her claim. The quotes and paraphrases you worked on earlier will fit well here. Be sure to include page or line numbers (or both) to identify where you found the quotation or idea.

- What do you think about the text’s claim?

In this box, you will explain your response to the text’s claim, including to what extent (if any) you agree with it.

- What are your examples?

In this column, give a few examples from your own experiences that help explain your response to the text’s claim.

- How does this text connect to other texts?

If you see a similarity to another text, make note of it here. Connections can be made even among texts that have very different claims.

Take a few moments to fill in the chart for Hamlet’s soliloquy. The final box on making connections may be left blank for the moment.

Text—“Roger Ebert: The Essential Man”

Prereading

Activity 14: Surveying the Text Oral Discussion

The second text is an excerpt from an interview with famous film critic Roger Ebert after he lost his lower jawbone and the ability to speak, eat, and drink as a result of his battle with cancer. The article, written by Chris Jones for *Esquire*, describes the joy and suffering Ebert experienced in his post surgery life. Roger Ebert died on April 4, 2013 at the age of 70.

Prior to reading, try to answer the questions below. They are designed to help you activate your schema, which is a technical term that means you generate some prior knowledge so you will be ready to read and comprehend more actively. If possible, first visit *Esquire’s* Web site and view the post-surgery portrait of Roger Ebert by Ethan Hill (<http://www.esquire.com/features/roger-ebert-0310>). Then quickly scan, or look over, the text before answering the following questions:

1. What do you know about Roger Ebert? If you do not know anything about him, try doing a quick Internet search and see what comes up.

Roger Ebert was one of the best-known movie reviewers of our time. A Pulitzer Prize winning film critic, Ebert appeared on television and in print for decades, perhaps most famously with Gene Siskel for the TV show At the Movies. He and Siskel popularized the phrase “two thumbs up.” In 2006, thyroid cancer led to the removal of Ebert’s lower jawbone, causing him to lose his speaking voice. In the years following his fight with cancer, Ebert became an even more prolific writer, publishing a cookbook and a memoir, in addition to his many movie reviews. Ebert also had a large following on Twitter (see <https://twitter.com/ebertchicago>). He refused to undergo additional surgeries that could restore his voice

2. What kind of writing—what genre—do you think this text is?
3. What kind of writing—what genre—do you think this text is?

Activity 15: Making Predictions and Asking Questions

The following questions will help you make specific predictions about the content of Ebert's text:

- What topics related to the issue of how society values life do you think Ebert might have talked about in this interview?
- Do you think Ebert's claim about the value of life will agree with Hamlet's or not?

Activity 16: Understanding Key Vocabulary

Because the excerpt from Chris Jones's interview with Roger Ebert is a moderately complex text to read, you might want to review a few vocabulary words prior to reading. When you run into these words during your reading of the text, note the context of each word and write a "best guess" synonym for it. Notice which words seem to have a deeper or different meaning from their regular usage. Your teacher may want you to compare your work with your classmates.

ritual (¶ 2): a rite or repeated practice

survival (¶ 5): endurance, life, or existence

radiates (¶ 6): glow or exude

savoring (¶ 7): relish or enjoy

cinematic (¶ 9): grand or dramatic; like a film

feverishly (¶ 10): excitedly or enthusiastically

rudimentary (¶ 11): basic or crude

mandible (¶ 12): jaw

tracheostomy (¶ 12): a surgical procedure to create an opening through the neck into the trachea or windpipe

monologue (¶ 15): a speech presenting the thoughts of a single person

argument (¶ 15): an attempt to persuade someone of something

facsimile (¶ 15): a copy or reproduction

nuanced (¶ 24): subtle; having multiple, complex meanings

sentimental (¶ 26): emotional

mystics (¶ 26): spiritualists or sages

intervention (¶ 29): intercession; action taken to make a change

Which sets or pairs of words are related to each other? Which words are associated with pleasure? Which words are associated with the body? Which words are associated with writing? Do you think you might encounter additional word families in this excerpt? Which ones?

Be sure you understand the meaning of the following medical terms, as well:

salivary glands (¶ 9)

radiation treatments (¶ 12)

carotid artery (¶ 12)

breathing tube (¶ 12)

G-tube (¶ 13)

IV pole (¶ 13)

Reading

Activity 17: Reading for Understanding

Read the article by Chris Jones. As you read, pay attention to the way Ebert talks about the value of life. As you did with Hamlet, try to determine whether Ebert appears to be generally pessimistic or optimistic in this interview. In addition, answer this question: Does Ebert also present an argument about the value of death? Be sure to distinguish Jones's words from Ebert's words.

Activity 18: Mapping the Organizational Structure Packet Item

Map the organization of the text by taking the following steps:

1. Draw a line across the page where the introduction, or first “chunk,” seems to end. Is it after the first paragraph, or are there several introductory paragraphs? Is it in the middle of a paragraph? How do you know that the text has moved on from its opening section?
2. Draw a line across the page where the conclusion begins. Is it the last paragraph, or are there several concluding paragraphs? How do you know that the text has reached the conclusion?

Write responses to the following:

3. What is the purpose of the opening section of the article?
4. What is the purpose of the middle section of the article?
5. What is the purpose of the concluding section of the article?

Activity 19: Annotating and Questioning the Text

First Highlighting: As you did with the Shakespeare text, you will mark Jones's interview with Roger Ebert. This time, use an orange-colored highlighter or colored pencil (or devise some other method of marking the text differently than you marked the soliloquy). Highlight the sentences, phrases, or words Ebert uses to describe what he thinks it means to be alive. Remember that most of Ebert's direct quotations will be in italics.

Characterizing the Text

Once you have highlighted Ebert's words, compare what you have selected to highlight with the choices a classmate has made. Then, working with your partner, mark some of the commonly highlighted parts with a "+" or "-" sign to indicate whether each quote shows a generally positive or negative outlook on life. Discussing the results with your partner, decide how you would answer this question about Ebert's outlook on life: Was he an optimist or a pessimist?

Second Highlighting: Go through the text once more, this time with a yellow highlighter. Imagine that you are reading Ebert's statements from Hamlet's perspective. Highlight any passages that Hamlet would find particularly interesting or compelling. Some of these may be the same words you have already highlighted while others will be new.

Activity 20: Analyzing Stylistic Choices Packet Item

Respond to the following questions on your own or with a small group or partner.

1. What details in the first two paragraphs convey a sense of the ordinary, behind-the-scenes routines of film critics? What words or phrases suggest the longevity of Ebert's career as a movie reviewer?
2. How does Chris Jones distinguish Ebert from his fellow reviewers? Why is this contrast important?
3. How does Jones's description of Ebert's reaction to *Broken Embraces* help us understand Ebert's character? What words or phrases reveal Ebert's attitude toward the experience of watching this film?
4. What are the connotations of "kid joy"?
5. Jones writes that, at the end of the film, "it looks as though [Ebert's] sitting on top of a cloud of paper." Jones then describes how Ebert "kicks his notes into a small pile with his feet." Why are these images important? What side of Ebert's personality do they reveal?
6. Why does Jones use the word "savoring" to describe Ebert's quiet pause after the film ends?
7. What does Jones mean when he says that the moment Ebert said his last words before losing the ability to talk to cancer "wasn't cinematic"? Why is this significant?
8. What details are important in Jones's description of Ebert's second-floor library? What do the objects in this room suggest about Ebert's current life?
9. Why does Jones say reading Ebert's post-cancer online journal is like "watching an Aztec pyramid being built"?
10. What words and phrases suggest the post-cancer, post-voice surge of productivity Ebert experienced in his writing?

Postreading

Activity 21: Summarizing and Responding—The Mock Interview

Ebert and Hamlet, in their respective texts, provide quite different perspectives on the meaning and value of life. Working with your partner, envision a scenario in which Hamlet somehow would have the opportunity to interview Ebert and vice versa. One of you should write out a series of at least five questions that Hamlet would ask Ebert while the other writes five questions for Ebert to ask Hamlet.

When the questions are completed, take on the personas of these two and conduct the interviews. Be sure to give answers that are in keeping with the points of view provided in the two texts. After conducting the mock interviews, discuss the relative viewpoints of the characters. How well would they get along with one another? How would each respond to the arguments made by the other?

Here are some sample interview questions:

- How do you feel you've been treated by other people?
- Are you afraid of death?
- Are there any benefits to suffering?
- How do you approach challenges?

Activity 22: Thinking Critically

Jones's text is an extended interview in the style of "A Day in the Life." As with the soliloquy we examined earlier, the form of this writing has an effect on how it is read and understood. The questions below will help you assess how Jones characterizes the subject of his interview, Roger Ebert, and how Ebert's statements characterize himself.

Questions about Logic (Logos)

1. An interview is a form of nonfiction—a text that tells the "truth." Do you think Jones is being truthful in his observations of Roger Ebert? Do you think Ebert is being truthful in his statements about himself? Are you more likely to believe what someone else says about a person or what the person says about himself or herself? Explain your reasoning.
2. How are emotional pain and loss different from physical pain and loss? Can the two be compared fairly?

Questions about the Writer (Ethos)

3. Unlike some cancer survivor stories, Chris Jones's interview with Roger Ebert doesn't make it clear that Ebert is successfully winning his fight against cancer. How does the uncertainty of Ebert's health impact the way we see his attitude toward the value of life? Would Ebert's credibility be the same if he had long ago defeated cancer?

4. Compare Ebert's attitude about dreams to Hamlet's. How do dreams affect the suffering of both men? What do their attitudes toward dreams reveal about their characters?
5. Compare Ebert's attitude about death to Hamlet's. How does each characterize "the undiscovered country" (Hamlet's words) "on the other side of death" (Ebert's words)? How do their attitudes toward death and what might happen after death relate to the way they approach life?
6. What does Ebert mean when he says, "When I am writing my problems become invisible and I am the same person I always was. All is well. I am as I should be." (par. 18)?
7. How does Jones characterize the post-cancer Ebert as being different from the pre-cancer Ebert?
8. Re-read the paragraph beginning, "But now everything he says must be written..." (par. 20). Why does Jones say of Ebert's new life, "so many words, so much writing"? What does this statement help us understand about what Ebert values in life?
9. What evidence, if any, can you find that suggests Ebert is more of an optimist after fighting cancer than before?
10. What evidence, if any, can you find that suggests Chris Jones admires and believes Roger Ebert?

Questions about Emotions (Pathos)

11. Why does Jones describe Ebert's medical crises in 2006 in graphic detail? What words suggest the brutality of the cancer treatment and recovery process Ebert experienced?
12. How do you think Jones's description of Ebert's "open smile" might impact readers?
13. What language in the excerpt from Ebert's review of *Broken Embraces* in the article's conclusion suggests Ebert's enduring passion for life?

The following questions may be used with students who have all five acts of *Hamlet*.

14. Hamlet tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern that he doesn't know why he's recently lost all his "mirth" or happiness (Act II, scene ii, lines 287-288). Do you think he's being honest? Does Hamlet have a reason to be unhappy? Does Ebert have a reason to be

happy?

15. Do you think Ebert would agree with Hamlet's claim in Act II, scene ii of the play that "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (lines 244-245)? What does Jones mean when he writes, "There are places where Ebert exists as the Ebert he remembers" (par. 15)?
16. Ebert seems to have learned early in his suffering what Hamlet only accepts near the end: "If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is't to leave betimes? Let be" (Act V, scene ii, lines 158-161). What do you think helps both men to ultimately reach this same conclusion?
17. Both the fictional Hamlet and the very real Roger Ebert are book lovers who understand the heights achieved by human intelligence. Compare Hamlet's "What a piece of work is man!" speech in Act II, scene ii to Ebert's statement that he is "grateful for [. . .] the gift of intelligence, and for life, love, wonder, and laughter" and to Jones's comment that Ebert "still finds joy in books, and in art, and in movies." In what ways are the two men similar? How are they different?

Activity 23: Charting Multiple Texts

Make an entry in your chart for the Ebert text. Fill it out as you did with the soliloquy. When you reach the entry for "How does this text connect to other texts?," briefly describe the ways in which Ebert responds to or challenges the assertions Shakespeare makes in his soliloquy for Hamlet.

Activity 24: Process Quickwrite:

Describe your process for reading a text rhetorically. What are the different stages of your reading process? What do you do during each stage?

Text #3—“What Is a Life Worth?”

Prereading

Activity 25: Surveying the Text Oral Discussion

The article “What Is a Life Worth?” comes from the February 12, 2002, issue of *Time* magazine. Take a look at its form and length. How much time do you think it will take to read this piece?

1. Have you read anything from *Time* magazine?
2. What do you know about the publication?
3. What kinds of articles are commonly included in it?
4. What types of people do you think compose the magazine’s primary readership?

Activity 26: Making Predictions and Asking Questions

This article includes the following subtitle: “To compensate families of the victims of Sept. 11, the government has invented a way to measure blood and loss in cash. A look at the wrenching calculus.”

1. What predictions can you make about the article’s content from this subtitle?
2. What connections do you think you might see between this article and the previous two texts you have read?
3. The first two texts took first-person perspectives on the subject. Do you anticipate that this article will continue in that vein, or will it be different? Why do you think so?

Activity 27: Understanding Key Vocabulary

Below, you will find three groupings of vocabulary words taken from “What Is a Life Worth?” The first group consists of words related to the legal and financial aspects of the article. The second list contains terms that convey information with particular emotional connotations. The final set of words is made up of terms that are used to describe the workings of the governmental plan to compensate 9/11 family victims. Working by yourself or with a partner, look over each list, and provide a brief definition for the words you do not know well. Pay particular attention to the ways in which the words connect to one another (e.g., people litigate, or sue, because they want somebody to compensate them for a loss).

Financial and legal terms

compensate (subtitle): make up for a loss

disparity (§ 2): unfairness, unevenness

valuation (§ 3): determination of a monetary value

litigation (§ 5): legal action; suing

commodify (§ 7): turn something into an object of monetary value

discretion (§ 9): judgment

liability (§ 10): debt or disadvantage

beneficiary (§ 22): recipient of a benefit, usually monetary

tort (§ 23): a civil lawsuit to remedy a wrongful act

allocation (§ 28): distribution, especially of money

Emotion-laden words

squeamish (§ 2): easily offended

garish (§ 2): offensively bright and showy

gall (§ 10): impudence; insolence

traumatize (§ 11): to inflict stress or pain upon someone

callous (§ 11): uncaring, cold

inconsolable (§ 13): incapable of being comforted

indignant (§ 13): full of anger over an injustice

balk (§ 21): resist; refuse to proceed

deteriorate (¶ 17): degenerate; gradually fall apart

Descriptive terms

rhetorical (¶ 12): related to the effective use of language

Rorschach test (¶ 11): an inkblot test that reveals a person's particular viewpoint

artillery (¶ 12): heavy ammunition used against an enemy

analogy (¶ 12): a comparison intended to illustrate common elements between seemingly different items

solidarity (¶ 17): unity based on a common interest

orchestrated (¶ 18): carefully arranged to achieve a particular effect

concoct (¶ 12): to put together from various materials

mechanism (¶ 21): technique for achieving a specific result

Reading

Activity 28: Reading for Understanding

As you read “What Is a Life Worth?” for the first time, look for the main issues and the various stances people take in response to those issues. Be sure to also look for connections to the idea of valuing life and to what was previously said about valuing life by Shakespeare and Ebert.

How is “life” defined in this text? For example, does “life” refer to a human body, a soul, human experience, existence, or quality of life? Does this definition include a person’s personal life and professional or working life?

Activity 29: Annotating and Questioning the Text

Choose two highlighter or pencil colors and revisit the text of the article on 9/11. The two colors will be used to mark two different aspects of the article. With the first color, highlight the words, phrases, and sentences from the article that describe valuing life in legal and financial terms. With the second color, highlight the words, phrases, and sentences that describe valuing life in human and emotional terms.

Postreading

Activity 30: Summarizing and Responding **Packet Item**

Using the sections you highlighted in the previous step, write a summary of the article's descriptions of how life is valued and people's responses to that valuing of life. Your summary should include only the most important ideas and must be limited to six sentences. If your teacher allows, you may want to work on this summary with a partner.

With a partner, read the summary you wrote in the previous step. One of you should read the summary from the perspective of Hamlet; the other should take on the persona of Ebert. Discuss with your partner how each would probably react to the way that "What Is a Life Worth?" describes the value of life. (The answers to the questions will vary depending upon what each summary has said about the article.)

- Would Hamlet agree with any of the ideas presented in the article? If so, which ones?
- Would Ebert agree with any of the ideas in the article? If so, which ones?
- Would Ebert and Hamlet agree at all in the way they might interpret this article's ideas? If so, how?

Activity 31: Thinking Critically

The previous two texts (the soliloquy and the interview) both provide very personal approaches to the idea of valuing life. The current text, though, is an article from a respected national news magazine. The following questions will help you work through some of the implications of the text's structure and features on the interpretation and understanding of the text.

1. Most news articles such as "What Is a Life Worth?" try to take an objective, unbiased approach. Would you agree that this text is unbiased, or do you think it favors one perspective? Explain your answer.
2. What kinds of evidence does Ripley, the author of the article, use to get across the key ideas and issues associated with the compensation of 9/11 victims and their families? Are any specific types of evidence more compelling to you as a reader? Less compelling?
3. How accurate do you think the information in the article is? In other words, do you think Time magazine and Ripley are to be trusted? Why or why not?
4. Does the article use logic, emotion, or both to make an impact on the reader? If so, describe how. Compare that use to the way logic and emotion are used by Shakespeare, Ebert, or both.

Activity 32: Charting Multiple Texts Packet Item

Make a third entry on your chart for "What Is a Life Worth?" Feel free to use the highlighting, summarizing, connections, and critical thinking work you did previously as a way to fill out the chart.

Text #4—A Human Life Value Calculator

Prereading

Activity 33: Surveying the Text

The Human Life Value Calculator comes from an Internet resource that calculates the value of a person's future earnings. If possible, view an actual Web site that has a Human Life Value Calculator rather than the printed text.

Activity 34: Making Predictions and Asking Questions

This text is quite different from the previous three texts. It is not personal or narrative, as the first two texts were, nor is it an informative text designed for a general audience. Instead, as you probably noticed when surveying the text, it is an interactive site, asking the reader to provide data to input and generating specific information based on the particular data provided by the user. Answer the following questions on the basis of what you know so far, before you begin to read:

1. What do you think might be the purpose of a text like this?
2. Who might use this text?
3. Since this text claims to calculate human life value, do you anticipate that this will have the most connections to Hamlet's soliloquy, Ebert's autobiography, or Ripley's *Time* article? Why?

Activity 35: Understanding Key Vocabulary

Human Life Value Calculators typically use the same key terms. Many of these terms are similar to those in the list of legal and financial terms from "What Is a Life Worth?" In the same way that finding connections among ideas in different texts helps us better understand those ideas, finding connections among vocabulary words helps us to better understand those words. As you find definitions for the terms below, try to include a similar term from the previous vocabulary lists. The Web site or text you viewed most likely has at least some of the following words:

income (earnings, wages, or profits)

assess (determine, judge; valuation)

incur (become liable for something; liability)

expenditure (payments made for something; allocation)

consumption (use of goods or services)

commodify (turn something into an object of monetary value)

fringe benefits (non-wage contributions by an employer to an employee, such as health insurance; beneficiary)

return (profits; takings)

inflation (price increases)

investments (assets; savings; reserves; funds)

retirement (the period of one's life after leaving employment)

contribution (something provided as payment, partial or full, for a particular purpose; allocation)

Reading

Activity 36: Reading for Understanding

Read through the text below, noting the way that a life's value is determined by a Human Life Value Calculator. If you have access to a Human Life Value Calculator Web site, you can choose a variety of data inputs to see how the results vary. Try providing different age, gender, occupation, and income information, and then examine the effect on the results. As you make sense of the calculator and its workings, make note of any connections you see to the previous texts we have read.

Activity 37: Annotating and Questioning the Text

This activity is a variation on the kind of highlighting you did with the *Time* magazine article. Once again, you will be using two colors to mark the text for two different aspects. This time, however, you will be using the highlighter colors to indicate your own responses to the ideas within the text. With one color, highlight the parts of the text with which you find yourself in agreement. Use the other color to highlight the parts of the text either that you disagree with or that raise questions for you.

Postreading

Activity 38: Summarizing and Responding **Packet Item**

Look over the highlighting you did in the previous step. Write a brief response—no more than eight sentences—to a Human Life Value Calculator Web site. The response should describe what the Website asserts about a human life's value and your reactions to those assertions. Remember that your response does not have to be in complete agreement or disagreement with the text; you might agree with some aspects and disagree with others.

Activity 39: Thinking Critically

1. The Web site text you have been studying differs structurally (that is, in the way it is put together) from the previous texts. Make a list of several of the differences between this text and the others.
2. Unlike the other texts, a Human Life Value Calculator has no single identified author. Does the lack of a named author affect your level of belief in the text's ideas and purpose? How can you find out more about the text and whose interests it represents?
3. Did this text produce in you an emotional response of any sort? If so, briefly describe it.
4. Consider the charts that the calculator produces. How well do you understand the meaning of these charts? How do the three charts differ? Does the use of all of the numbers within the charts seem to make a logical argument about the value of life?

Activity 40: Charting Multiple Texts

As you did with the previous texts, fill out a chart entry for the Web site. To facilitate this task, you may refer, as needed, to the highlighting you have done, your responses, and the questions (above) you just answered.

Activity 41: Assessment of Rhetorical Reading Strategies—No-Points Quiz

Read the passage below. Then choose the best answer for each question.

What Is The Value Of A Human Life?
by Kenneth Feinberg

Washington attorney Kenneth Feinberg specializes in alternative dispute resolution. He managed the compensation funds for the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and Virginia Tech shootings, and he has worked with victims of human radiation experiments and Holocaust slave labor.

May 25, 2008

What is an individual life worth? Do our lives have equal value? Struggling with these questions led me to my belief.

After Sept. 11, I confronted the challenge of placing a value on human life by calculating different amounts of compensation for each and every victim. The law required that I give more money to the stockbroker, the bond trader and the banker than to the waiter, the policeman, the fireman and the soldier at the Pentagon. This is what happens every day in courtrooms throughout our nation. Our system of justice has always been based upon this idea—that compensation for death should be directly related to the financial circumstances of each victim.

But as I met with the 9/11 families and wrestled with issues surrounding the valuation

of lives lost, I began to question this basic premise of our legal system. Trained in the law, I had always accepted that no two lives were worth the same in financial terms. But now I found the law in conflict with my growing belief in the equality of all life. “Mr. Feinberg, my husband was a fireman and died a hero at the World Trade Center. Why are you giving me less money than the banker who represented Enron? Why are you demeaning the memory of my husband?”

My response was defensive and unconvincing. At first I gave the standard legal argument—that I was not evaluating the intrinsic moral worth of any individual. I was basing my decision on the law, just as juries did every day. But this explanation fell on deaf ears. Grieving families couldn’t hear it. And I didn’t believe it myself.

I was engaged in a personal struggle. I felt it would make more sense for Congress to provide the same amount of public compensation to each and every victim—to declare, in effect, that all lives are equal. But in this case, the law prevailed.

Last year, however, in the wake of the Virginia Tech shootings and the deaths of 32 victims, I was again asked to design and administer a compensation system, this one privately funded. And I realized that Feinberg the citizen should trump Feinberg the lawyer. My legal training would no longer stand in the way. This time all victims—students and faculty alike—would receive the same compensation.

In the case of Sept. 11, if there is a next time, and Congress again decides to award public compensation, I hope the law will declare that all life should be treated the same. Courtrooms, judges, lawyers and juries are not the answer when it comes to public compensation. I have resolved my personal conflict and have learned a valuable lesson at the same time. I believe that public compensation should avoid financial distinctions which only fuel the hurt and grief of the survivors. I believe all lives should be treated the same.

Independently produced for *Weekend Edition Sunday* by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman with John Gregory and Viki Merrick.

Determining the Meaning of Words

1. Which of the following words suggest the difficulty of the task Feinberg faced? Mark all that apply.
 - a. Challenge
 - b. wrestled
 - c. conflict
 - d. struggle
 - e. privately

Short Answer: Explain your reasoning for selecting the answer(s) you chose

Understanding Key Ideas

2. Why does Feinberg emphasize that awarding compensation based on the financial circumstances of victims “happens every day in courtrooms” and that our system of justice “has always been based upon this idea”?
 - a. To demonstrate how widely accepted this practice is in our judicial system
 - b. To minimize the importance of the judicial system
 - c. To expose the corruption and cruelty of judges and lawyers
 - d. To show how many people have been harmed by these decisions

Short Answer: Explain your reasoning for selecting the answer(s) you chose.

Analyzing Structure

3. Why does the author begin the third paragraph with the word “but”?
 - a. To introduce a fuller description of his legal qualifications
 - b. To challenge the views of readers who think victims should be compensated equally
 - c. To signal the start of his shift away from his earlier beliefs
 - d. To paint a vivid picture in the reader’s mind

Short Answer: Explain your reasoning for selecting the answer(s) you chose.

Understanding Key Ideas

4. Why does Feinberg say his response to the widow of a firefighter who died at the World Trade Center was “defensive and unconvincing”?
 - a. He did not have the legal knowledge to give her a satisfying answer.
 - b. He was angry that she asked him a difficult question in front of the other families.

- c. He was beginning to find the human perspectives on the issue more compelling than the legal view.
- d. He did not try his hardest to convince the families to accept the government's offer.

Short Answer: Explain your reasoning for selecting the answer(s) you chose.

Determining an Author's Point of View

- 5. What does Feinberg mean when he says, "Feinberg the citizen should trump Feinberg the lawyer"?

 - a. His experiences persuading the victims' families to join the Victim Compensation Fund had made him confused about his true identity.
 - b. He believed that both sets of identities and values were equally important to making an ethical and effective decision.
 - c. He understood at last that he could never hope to change the justice system despite his best efforts.
 - d. He decided that his personal perspectives should be more important than his legal training in the new compensation case.

Short Answer: Explain your reasoning for selecting the answer(s) you chose.

Understanding How Ideas Interact

- 6. What is the significance of the phrases "no longer" and "this time" in the sentence where Feinberg explains that all victims of the Virginia Tech shootings would be treated the same way?

 - a. These phrases show that Feinberg understands he has a second chance to declare that all lives are equal.
 - b. These phrases suggest that the Virginia Tech shootings cannot be compared to 9/11 because the contexts are too different.
 - c. These phrases imply that Feinberg has decided to stop being a lawyer because he no longer believes in the justice system.
 - d. These phrases indicate that the Virginia Tech compensation decisions were an exception and could not apply to Congressional decisions.

Short Answer: Explain your reasoning for selecting the answer(s) you chose.

After reviewing the feedback from this activity, discuss the following questions with a partner.

1. Where are you going? What will you need to do in this class, other classes, college, or your future career that will require you to read rhetorically?
2. How are you going? What rhetorical reading skills have you mastered so far? Which skills are still challenging for you?
3. Where to next? What do you need to do to continue to improve your ability to read rhetorically?

Connecting Reading to Writing

Discovering What You Think

Activity 42: Reading the Assignment

As you read the assignments below, make note of the type of writing you are required to complete, the sources you may need to describe and discuss in your writing, and the audience for your writing.

Writing Assignment

Respond to one of the following prompts as your final assessment of learning for this module.

Prompt #1:

So far in this assignment sequence, we have heard a number of different voices giving insights into the value of life. Hamlet's soliloquy offers an emotional, metaphor-laden glimpse into the thinking of a young man contemplating suicide. Chris Jones's interview with Roger Ebert uses first-hand observations and excerpts from Ebert's blog and movie reviews to convey how the film critic thinks about life. Amanda Ripley's article from *Time* magazine provides insight into the problems involved in translating the concept of valuing life from abstract terms into actual dollars and cents. A Human Life Value Calculator establishes specific criteria for assigning monetary value to a person's life.

You might not fully agree or disagree with any of the texts' essential claims about the value of life. This makes your voice an important

contribution to this discussion about how we should value human life. Where do your ideas fit into the terrain mapped by the other texts we have read? Is it right to assign dollar values to a person's life? Do suffering and illness impact how we should value life? Assume that the audience for your piece consists of intelligent citizens interested in this issue—the same types of people, for instance, who would read *Time* magazine.

As you write your essay, think about the different ways the authors we have read make their points about valuing life. Depending on the points you are trying to make, you might want to use some metaphors for life, as Hamlet does, or share observations and anecdotes the way Chris Jones does. On the other hand, you may choose to include some words from people you interview, as Ripley does in her article, or you might even decide to establish some criteria for how human life should be calculated in monetary terms. As you construct your essay, make conscious choices about the ways you can represent your ideas to your reader about how society should assign value to human life?

Be sure to refer to and cite the readings. You may also use examples from your personal experience or observations.

Prompt #2 Culminating Essay

The following excerpt is from Steve Jobs's 2005 Commencement Address at Stanford University. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you explain Jobs's argument and discuss the ways in which you agree or disagree with his views. Support your position, providing reasons and examples from the readings in this module. You may also choose to include personal observations and experiences when appropriate. Organize your essay carefully.

“Remembering that I’ll be dead soon is the most important tool I’ve ever encountered to help me make the big choices in life. Because almost everything—all external expectations, all pride, all fear of embarrassment or failure—these things just fall away in the face of death, leaving only what is truly important. Remembering that you are going to die is the best way I know to avoid the trap of thinking you have something to lose. You are already naked. There is no reason not to follow your heart.

About a year ago I was diagnosed with cancer. I had a scan at 7:30 in the morning, and it clearly showed a tumor on my pancreas. I didn’t even know what a pancreas was. The doctors told me this was almost certainly a type of cancer that is incurable, and that I should expect to live no longer than three to six months. My doctor advised me to go home and get my affairs in order, which is doctor’s code for prepare to die. It means to try to tell your kids everything you thought you’d have the next 10 years to tell them in just a few months. It means to make sure everything is buttoned up so that it will be as easy as possible for your family. It means to say your goodbyes.

I lived with that diagnosis all day. Later that evening I had a biopsy, where they stuck an endoscope down my throat, through my stomach and into my intestines, put a needle into my pancreas and got a few cells from the tumor. I was sedated, but my wife, who was there, told me that when they viewed the cells under a microscope the doctors started crying because it turned out to be a very rare form of pancreatic cancer that is curable with surgery. I had the surgery and I’m fine now.

This was the closest I’ve been to facing death, and I hope it’s the closest I get for a few more decades. Having lived through it, I can now say this to you with a bit more certainty than when death was a useful but purely intellectual concept:

No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don’t want to die to get there. And yet death is the destination we all share. No one has ever escaped it. And that is as it should be, because Death is very likely the single best invention of Life. It is Life’s change agent. It clears out the old to make way for the new.”

Activity 43: Analyzing the Assignment

Complete a Do/What chart for the prompt you have chosen to help clarify directions. To create a “Do/What Chart,” draw a T-graph in your notes, labeling the right side “Do” and the left side

“What.” Then list verbs from the prompt in the “Do” column and the objects of those verbs in the “What” column.

Do	What
<i>write</i>	<i>essay detailing your perspective on the value of life</i>

Activity 44: Taking a Stance

Revisit the chart you made while reading the texts. Pay particular attention to the column that asks about your opinion of each text’s claims. This will help you determine where your ideas fit within the “conversation” about valuing life that takes place in the texts we read. Fill in these blanks as a way of determining your own position.

- “I agree most with the ideas in because .”
- “I agree least with the ideas in because .”

Activity 45: Formulating a Working Thesis

Your essay’s thesis is the primary claim that you will be making about valuing life. There are several attributes of claims that form the basis of successful essays. A good claim is

1. Clear: Your reader should easily understand your essay’s claim.
2. Compelling: The claim should be interesting to your reader and should make the reader want to read your entire paper.
3. Complex: A claim that is too simple will not engage your reader and won’t contribute significantly to the “conversation” about the topic.
4. Contestable: Any claim that no one would disagree with is unlikely to be of interest to your reader.

Try writing a few claims for your essay. It might be helpful to think of your claim as a response to a specific question whose answer matters to the essay’s audience. For instance, if you are responding to Prompt #1, your claim should try to answer the question, “How should people value life in contemporary American society?” Your claim could take the form of a sentence that combines both an assertion—a statement of your opinion—and a rationale—a generalized reason in support of the assertion. Here are a couple of examples of claims that take this form:

- Schools should put more money into academics than into athletics because the primary goal of a school is to educate students, not to train athletes.
- The *Star Wars* films remain popular because they show the classic tale of an individual's triumph over oppression.
- The rule of law is more important than anyone's personal feelings because it's the only way to ensure that everyone has the same rights in court.

Put your claim into this assertion-rationale form, and you will be ready to begin drafting your essay.

Activity 46: Generating Evidence to Support Your Claims

Many of the activities you have completed so far have prepared you for your final writing task. These kinds of informal writing assignments are part of a process called “writing to learn.” You have been using writing, in essence, as a way for you to understand and interpret the texts you have been reading. Such informal writing is also a useful tool for helping you get ready to do more formal writing, as with the writing assignment above. To help you construct and support your claims for this essay, be sure to revisit the informal writing you have done. The chart, in particular, will help you to identify evidence you can use in your paper.

As you review the evidence you've already generated through your quickwrites, annotations, and chart, consider the following questions:

1. How closely does this piece of evidence relate to the claim it is supposed to support?
2. Is this piece of evidence a fact or an opinion? Is it an example?
3. If this evidence is a fact, what kind of fact is it (statistic, experimental result, quotation)?
4. If it is an opinion, what makes the opinion credible?
5. What makes this evidence persuasive?
6. How well will the evidence suit the audience and the rhetorical purpose of the piece?

Activity 47: Getting Ready to Write

What personal experiences have you had that inform your stance on this topic? What observations and/or insights from outside reading or other sources can you add to the evidence you generated from the reading selections in this module? Jot your ideas down in your notes.

Writing Rhetorically

Activity 48: Composing a Draft

Every writer's process for crafting a paper's first draft is unique. Some prefer to write an entire paper at a single sitting; others carefully plan the paper with outlines or maps prior to writing. The importance of a paper's first draft is that it provides an opportunity for you to shape your ideas into a coherent, written form.

Activity 49: Organizing the Essay

There are as many ways of organizing an essay as there are writers. Even so, essays will always have a beginning, middle, and end.

1. The beginning, which may be one or more paragraphs long, sets up the essay's central question and claim.
2. The middle of the essay provides ideas and evidence for the claim you are making. The evidence you provide may come in a number of forms, including quotations from the texts we have read and examples from your own life and experience. The chart you have completed may be helpful in this regard.
3. The end is where you reach conclusions about the question and argue that your claim is the most reasonable way of answering the question.

Activity 50: Developing the Content

Read the following guidelines about developing support for your essay and discuss them with your classmates.

1. Body paragraphs give evidence in the form of examples, illustrations, statistics, and so forth and analyze the meaning of the evidence.
2. Each body paragraph is usually directly related to the question that the claim is attempting to answer.
3. No set number of paragraphs make up an essay.

Activity 51: Using the Words of Others

When you write anything in response to a text you have read, you will have to describe for your reader what the original text says. This can be done through direct quotations (saying precisely what the original author said), paraphrasing (providing a specific idea from the text, but putting it in your own words), and summarizing (providing the primary ideas from the text in a generalized form). The activities you have already completed have asked you to find quotations, provide paraphrases, and write summaries, so you should be well prepared for using the words of Shakespeare, Ebert, Ripley, and the makers of the human life value calculator within your formal essay.

When you use any method for representing the ideas from another text in your own writing, you must provide a citation. Your teacher will probably already have described for you the type of citation you need to use for this class, so be sure to follow those instructions carefully. Remember, even when you are summarizing and paraphrasing, you still must attribute the ideas to the original writer.

Revising and Editing

Activity 52: Revising Rhetorically

Revising your essay means looking at it again. Revision is often difficult because as writers, we know what we are trying to say; our essays, therefore, make sense to us. In order to revise effectively, we have to be able to look at our writing from a new perspective. Having classmates or others read our work provides new viewpoints that can lead us to revise effectively. Remember that the point is not for the readers to “fix” your essay; the readers’ job is simply to give you feedback about how they read and made sense of your essay. As the writer, you are in charge of responding to what your readers tell you about the essay and doing the work necessary to make it more reader-friendly and effective.

Your teacher may provide you with some activities for revising your essay. Some suggestions for ways to look at your essay that will provide you with feedback are listed below:

- Put your draft aside for a few days, and then reread it. This allows you to develop some “critical distance” from the essay and usually makes it easier to see places that may need some revision.
- Ask a classmate to read the essay with a few highlighters or colored pencils. They can use red to signify places where you used powerful words, green for ideas that need to “grow” a little more, and so forth.
- Have a couple of classmates read your essay aloud together while you overhear their conversation about the essay. As they stop and discuss various parts of the paper, take notes on what they say. Their reactions may give you very good insights into how to revise your paper.

Activity 53: Editing the Draft

Editing is often confused with revising, but editing has more to do with making your essay “clean”—that is, free of errors—while revising is about developing your ideas as clearly as possible. Of course, editing may happen all through the processes of writing, but the editing stage of writing comes when your essay is nearly in its finished form. Editing your paper is like giving a car a nice tune-up and polish before a car show; it lets the paper really shine. Here are some ideas for editing your paper:

- Read your paper aloud. This will help you identify places where a sentence doesn’t sound quite right or spots where you might need to adjust punctuation or word choice.

- Ask a classmate or parent to read the paper and make suggestions about sentence construction, punctuation, verb tenses, and spelling.
- Run the essay through the computer’s spelling and grammar check. Make sure to look carefully at the suggestions made by the computer and ask someone you trust—a teacher, classmate, or parent—if you have doubts. Computers often suggest the wrong word for misspellings (if you misspell “definitely” by writing “definitely,” for example, the computer will probably suggest that the correct spelling is “defiantly”), so pay close attention.

Activity 54: Reflecting on the Writing

After your essay is finished, reflect on the processes you went through to write the paper. Answer the following questions:

1. How helpful did you find the highlighting, charting, and question- answer activities?
2. How much was your writing affected by your notes in the charts?
3. How helpful were the prewriting and revising activities?
4. What did you learn from reading and writing in this assignment module?
5. Which strategies will you use again when you are asked to read and write assignments like this one in the future?

Charting Multiple Texts

Text Information	What is the text's big issue?	What claim does the text make?	What are the examples/ quotes from the text?	What do you think about the text's claim?	What are your examples?	How does this text connect to other texts?
Title: Author: Genre:						
Title: Author: Genre:						
Title: Author: Genre:						
Title: Author: Genre:						