

The air out here is still and clear. I walk, almost as if in a dream, leaving the smoke and the mob far behind me. Auroral streaks have begun to color the sky. All around me are the sounds of silence; only my lonely footsteps can hopefully touch its outer perimeter.

But the silence is broken, broken by a golden dawn. Somewhere a child is crying. As I turn to the sound, it is joined by a gentle voice, soothing it, telling it not to be afraid. In the distance I watch two lovers; no sound passes between them, for a single touch speaks all knowledge, all hope for their tomorrows. I pass a very old man leading a little girl by the hand; a tear glistens on his wrinkled cheek as he watches her. The child's laughter sings forth sweetly, all the joy of morning in a single sound. A little boy catches up his squirming puppy, hugging him close. A man turns away; he goes back to the mob to fight a war he does not understand, in a land he does not know, to preserve an ideal he can not explain.

I look up, and suddenly I see the source of the gentle touch that freed me. It fills me with hope for tomorrow, joy for today, with the miracle and wonder of being a whole person, nevermore fragmented. It demands all I have to give; it asks for nurture by trust and faith and a desire to keep it alive. But it promises all; for it is purpose, beauty, and fullness, the single thing that allows a person to truly live and create. It envelops me gently and silently.

Love comes quietly, but I know that it is there. Suddenly I am not alone any more. . . .

## Confessions of a Test-taker

Carol Clay

I AM KNOWN to several worthy organizations as 312125/31181-512/19! This rather staggering numerical nomenclature, combined with my percentile rank and profile, identify me as a not-especially-unique college freshman. In my slightly more than thirteen years of education I have been tested, analyzed, scrutinized, pigeon-holed, and categorized to an absolutely alarming degree of thoroughness. The extent of my intelligence and knowledge, my capacity to learn, and every minute psychological quirk have been ferreted out and exposed by the systematic testing process that is the pride of the modern educational complex. Intellectually naked I stand before the various boards and committees of learned men who compose and administer these examinations.

The diabolical stripping of my brain began before I had even entered kindergarten. Although they are disguised under such varied euphemisms as "Educational Capacity" and "Mental Readiness," intelligence tests are for one purpose only—to prove that one is as smart as his parents have been bragging he is for so long. Naturally, these tests are hardly an accurate measurement of ability, because most young children consider them a game. Since the examiners keep assuring the child that the tests are just that, the conclusion is hardly surprising. Besides, any child worth his building blocks will try to fit a round peg into a square hole from sheer perverseness and the challenge of it.

Unfortunately, this initial experience with testing was only the beginning of a life-time of test-taking. Through the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, I was introduced to the unbelievable complexity of the mechanics of these tests. In fact, the measure of achievement on these grade-school brain-twisters seems to be primarily the neatness with which one can color in the answer spaces. "Using only the special, Grade-A, Number Two pencils with which you have been so graciously provided by the test bureau, indicate the correct answer by blackening the space provided completely. Make no marks at all outside this tiny circle! Erase carefully any stray bit of lead on the paper!" On and on continue the directions until the zeal with which one answers the questions is greatly exceeded by the care with which one indicates the answer. There is a real test of intelligence!

In high school, however, test-taking becomes a deadly serious business. I review my high school days through a maze of abbreviations—NEDT, CEEB, PSAT, SAT, OSPT, NMSQT, and NHSSQT. Of these the most important, of course, was the Scholastic Aptitude Test, better known as the college board. On this fateful examination the skill I had acquired in making neat circles and rectangles was put to definite use; however, I soon discovered an even greater pitfall to the seeker of good test scores. Translating the statistical information they request into numbers and symbols that identify my individual paper to the almighty grading machine is a much greater test of ability than the mass of grammar, analogy, and mathematics on the test itself. "Place your name, or as much of it as you can in the small boxes." (Which small boxes? There are forty-three on the page!) "Go down the column beneath each letter and blacken in the corresponding number." (That is why I am known as 312125/31181512/19!) "Answer the following questions: When were you born? In what county were you born? Do you like chocolate pudding?" (These questions are for identification purposes, but only fifty million other people like chocolate pudding, too!)

These achievement and college entrance examinations were, by no means, the only way by which my brain has been picked. In my junior year the school administered the Ohio State Psychological

Tests to catalogue my psyche, a reading test to measure the speed of my eyeballs, the National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test and the National Honor Society Scholarship Qualifying Test to qualify my scholarship, and lastly, a national French test for a hundred dollar prize—the only sensible test of any, I thought. Finally, having steeled myself to the necessity of suffering through all the various examinations, I rejoiced, after graduation, at the cheerful thought of no more tests. Lovely as the prospect seemed, this utopia was not to be my fate, for after only two days at Butler University I was once more pinned to the board, struggling like a biology-class frog, and dissected for my attitudes, beliefs, status, and family relations. I just cannot win!

