AP 11

Language and Composition

Summer Assignment

2025-2026

A Three-Part Assignment

Part 1: 50 points

Grade Level Reading:
The Five People You Meet in Heaven **by Mitch Albom**

Part 2: 300 points

Summer Essay

Part 3: 100 points

Flash Cards

****This assignment will be emailed to you and include the terms and articles needed for completion.**

In addition to your One School/ Many Books selection, below is your Summer Reading Assignment.

We live in a world of facts.

For example, with only minor efforts, we can learn many things about the weather, approaching storms, appropriate weather-related technical terms, and other things which allow, seemingly, young children to talk with knowledge heretofore available only to students in college classes in meteorology.

Facts can be fascinating bits of knowledge (like all those things you know from reading the social media); facts can help understanding why you have allergies or why your knee hurts. Facts can inform (like all the reasons why you can't go to college in Hawaii or why you cannot have a new car).

However, facts can weigh down the readability of material assigned for class.

Rhetoric means "the study of effective, persuasive language use." Aristotle used the word *rhetoric* to describe the "available means of persuasion." We will use the word *rhetoric* many times in AP English 11, and *rhetoric* is the key term in the College Board's definition of AP Language and Composition.

Your summer reading assignment will be an opportunity for you to understand how the use of facts can help or hinder the readability of material. Too many facts can, indeed, ruin the effectiveness of the rhetorical nature of print material.

You will also need access (print or on-line) to a **reputable** news magazine from which you can find an article in which there is an abundance of facts.

THE ASSIGNMENT

Compare how the use of facts can aid the purpose of the presentation of an author's thoughts.

❖ Read Bill Moyers'
"Message to West Point" (located at the bottom of this assignment): In this material, from a speech made at West Point, Moyers uses factual examples to develop his topic. He uses facts gathered from his TV documentaries, from his readings, and from his knowledge of history.

"SMU 2006 Commencement Address" (located at the bottom of this assignment): In this material, from a speech made Southern Methodist University, Moyers uses many numbers—the ultimate example of factual information.

❖ *Read an article from a reputable news magazine in which facts are used in abundance to convey the author's purpose.* Before the due date, email me a copy of this article.

So here is the assignment: Develop your list of 3 to 5 purposes which are ***shared in common*** (in the above 3 works) to make the use of facts effective in conveying the authors' purposes in writing. For example, you might find that facts serve the purposes of **providing a foundation for the reader's understanding, documenting the process by which something happened,** or some other reasons which YOU believe are shared in the resources you have read (For a better understanding of purpose go to: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/rhetorical_situation/purposes.html).

This assignment should be at least 4 pages long (which means 1 word on the 5th page) and no longer than 6 pages. It should be in correct academic form (double-spaced, Times Font, 1-inch margins on all sides, etc.). You should document parenthetically direct quotations and paraphrases used in your paper. However, a Works Cited is not required. Plagiarism will result in a grade of zero and removal from the class. Documentation should be MLA in-text format detailed in your previous English classes and the *BCS Style Guide*.

Make sure to avoid any "gross-outs" (a list is provided in your syllabus).

Feel free to come to the strictly optional "study session" during the Summer: 12pm -1pm on July 23rd.
You may also email me at mcnabors@briarcrest.com for assistance.

See the reverse side for the assignment rubric

Name:_____

Grading Rubric

This assignment is a 300-point grade, with the points being distributed as indicated below:

Synthesis

____/60 points *to include*

◊*Correct use of appropriate documentation in appropriate form*
◊*Seamless insertion of documented materials so as not to detract from readability, including the use of documented paraphrases*
◊*Good use of documented research to support the paper*

Exigence

see Grading Rubric in the *Syllabus*

_____/ 160 points *to include*

◊*paper is clear & focused; holds reader's attention*
◊*organization enhances and showcases the central theme, is compelling, & moves the reader through the text*
◊*presented in a voice and tone appropriate to the audience, engages the craft of writing to respect the purpose for writing*
◊*proper use of unity, coherence, and emphasis once the thesis has been presented*
◊*words convey the intended message, are powerful and engaging; good use of transitions and other organizational elements*
◊*sentences underscore & enhance the meaning of the paper; appropriate vocabulary for a formal theme, good syntax, appropriate attention to the rhetorical situation*

Conventions

_____/80 points

◊*writer adheres to standard writing conventions, including grammatical accuracy based on the* ***Briarcrest Style Guide.***
__ x 1= -__ ___x 5=-____
◊*writer uses conventions to enhance readability*
◊*paragraphing reinforces sound organizational structure*

Notice

◊*This sheet must be attached to the paper when submitted. Failure to do so will result in a 25-point deduction*

All parts of this assignment (Part 1, 2, 3) and materials relating to the assignment are due at the beginning of class on August 12th, 2025.

Part 2: Rhetorical Strategies and Stylistic Devices:

Create **flashcards** for each of the terms from the list below. On one side of the card, write the word. On the other side, define it and provide your own example. The attached list will provide you with definitions; you will need to research an example. Then, place them in alphabetical order, punch a hole in one corner and bind them with a note card ring. These cards will be collected for a grade on the first day of school, and *you will also be tested on these terms during the second week of school.*

Alliteration: The repetition of the same sound or letter at the beginning of consecutive words or syllables.

Allusion: An indirect reference, often to another text or an historic event.

Analogy: An extended comparison between two seemingly dissimilar things.

Anaphora: The repetition of words at the beginning of successive clauses.

Anecdote: A short account of an interesting event.

Annotation: Explanatory or critical notes added to a text.

Antecedent: The noun to which a later pronoun refers.

Antimetabole: The repetition of words in an inverted order to sharpen a contrast.

Antithesis: Parallel structure that juxtaposes contrasting ideas.

Aphorism: A short, astute statement of a general truth.

Appositive: A word or phrase that renames a nearby noun or pronoun.

Archaic diction: The use of words common to an earlier time period; antiquated language.

Argument: A statement put forth and supported by evidence.

Aristotelian triangle: A diagram that represents a rhetorical situation as the relationship among the speaker, the subject, and the audience (see rhetorical triangle).

Assertion: An emphatic statement; declaration. An assertion supported by evidence becomes an argument.

Assumption: A belief or statement taken for granted without proof.

Asyndeton: Leaving out conjunctions between words, phrases, clauses.

Attitude: The speaker's position on a subject as revealed through his or her tone.

Audience: One's listener or readership; those to whom a speech or piece of writing is addressed.

Authority: A reliable, respected source—someone with knowledge. See ethos

Beg the Question Fallacy: When an argument's premises assume the truth of the conclusion, instead of supporting it. Assuming without proof the stand/position, or a significant part of the stand, that is in question.

Bias: Prejudice or predisposition toward one side of a subject or issue.

Cite: Identifying a part of a piece of writing as being derived from a source.

Claim: An assertion, usually supported by evidence.

Close reading: A careful reading that is attentive to organization, figurative language, sentence structure, vocabulary, and other literary and structural elements of a text.

Coach Nabors: Your Beloved Instructor.

Colloquial/ism: An informal or conversational use of language.

Common ground: Shared beliefs, values, or positions.

Complex sentence: A sentence that includes one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.

Concession: A reluctant acknowledgment or yielding.

Connotation: That which is implied by a word, as opposed to the word's literal meaning (see denotation).

Context: Words, events, or circumstances that help determine meaning.

Coordination: Grammatical equivalence between parts of a sentence, often through a coordinating conjunction such as "and", or "but."

Counterargument: A challenge to a position; an opposing argument.

Declarative sentence: A sentence that makes a statement.

Deduction: Reasoning from general to specific.

Denotation: The literal meaning of a word; its dictionary definition.

Diction: Word choice.

Documentation: Bibliographic information about the sources used in a piece of writing.

Elegiac: Mournful over what has passed or been lost; often used to describe tone.

Epigram: A brief, witty statement.

Ethos: A Greek term referring to the character of a person; one of Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals (see logos and pathos).

Figurative language: The use of tropes or figures of speech; going beyond literal meaning to achieve literary effect.

Figure of speech: An expression that strives for literary effect rather than conveying a literal meaning.

Hyperbole: Exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis.

Imagery: Vivid use of language that evokes a reader's senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, hearing).

Imperative sentence: A sentence that requests or commands.

Induction: Reasoning from specific to general.

Inversion: A sentence in which the verb precedes the subject.

Irony: A contradiction between what is said and what is meant; incongruity between action and result.

Juxtaposition: Placement of two things side by side for emphasis.

Logos: A Greek term that means "word"; an appeal to logic; one of Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals (see

ethos and pathos).

Metaphor: A figure of speech or trope through which one thing is spoken of as though it were something else, thus making an implicit comparison.

Metonymy: Use of an aspect of something to represent the whole.

Oxymoron: A figure of speech that combines two contradictory terms.

Paradox: A statement that seems contradictory but is actually true.

Parallelism: The repetition of similar grammatical or syntactical patterns.

Parody: A piece that imitates and exaggerates the prominent features of another; used for comic effect or ridicule.

Pathos: A Greek term that refers to suffering but has come to be associated with broader appeals to emotion; one of Aristotle's three rhetorical appeals (see ethos and logos).

Persona: The speaker, voice, or character assumed by the author of a piece of writing.

Personification: Assigning lifelike characteristics to inanimate objects.

Polemic: An argument against an idea, usually regarding philosophy, politics, or religion.

Polysyndeton: The deliberate use of a series of conjunctions.

Premise (major, minor): two parts of a syllogism. The concluding sentence of a syllogism takes its predicate from the major premise and its subject from the minor premise.

> **Major premise:** All mammals are warm-blooded.
>
> **Minor premise:** All horses are mammals.
>
> **Conclusion:** All horses are warm-blooded (see syllogism).

Propaganda: A negative term for writing designed to sway opinion rather than present information.

Purpose: One's intention or objective in a speech or piece of writing.

Refute: To discredit an argument, particularly a counterargument.

Rhetoric: The art of speaking or writing effectively.

Rhetorical modes: Patterns of organization developed to achieve a specific purpose; modes include but are not limited to narration, description, comparison and contrast, cause and effect, definition, exemplification, classification and division, process analysis, and argumentation.

Rhetorical question: A question asked more to produce an effect than to summon an answer. Rhetorical triangle: A diagram that represents a rhetorical situation as the relationship among the speaker, the subject, and the audience (see Aristotelian triangle).

Satire: An ironic, sarcastic, or witty composition that claims to argue for something, but actually argues against it.

Sentence patterns: The arrangement of independent and dependent clauses into known sentence constructions—such as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex.

Sentence variety: Using a variety of sentence patterns to create a desired effect.

Simile: A figure of speech that uses "like" or "as" to compare two things.

Simple sentence: A statement containing a subject and predicate; an independent clause.

Source: A book, article, person, or other resource consulted for information.

Speaker: A term used for the author, speaker, or the person whose perspective (real or imagined) is being advanced in a speech or piece of writing.

Straw man: A logical fallacy that involves the creation of an easily refutable position; misrepresenting, then attacking an opponent's position.

Style: The distinctive quality of speech or writing created by the selection and arrangement of words and figures of speech.

Subject: In rhetoric, the topic addressed in a piece of writing.

Subordinate clause: A clause that modifies an independent clause, created by a subordinating conjunction.

Subordination: The dependence of one syntactical element on another in a sentence.

Syllogism: A form of deductive reasoning in which the conclusion is supported by a major and minor premise (see premise; major, and minor).

Syntax: Sentence structure.

Synthesize: Combining or bringing together two or more elements to produce something more complex.

Thesis: The central idea in a work to which all parts of the work refer.

Thesis statement: A statement of the central idea in a work, may be explicit or implicit.

Tone: The speaker's attitude toward the subject or audience.

Topic sentence: A sentence, most often appearing at the beginning of a paragraph, that announces the paragraph's idea and often unites it with the work's thesis.

Trope: Artful diction; the use of language in a nonliteral way; also called a figure of speech. Understatement: Lack of emphasis in a statement or point; restraint in language often used for ironic effect.

Voice: In grammar, a term for the relationship between a verb and a noun (active or passive voice). In rhetoric, a distinctive quality in the style and tone of writing.

Zeugma: A construction in which one word (usually a verb) modifies or governs—often in different, sometimes incongruent ways—two or more words in a sentence. (He lost his patience and his dog.)

Message To West Point

Bill Moyers

An excerpt from the Sol Feinstone Lecture on The Meaning of Freedom delivered by Bill Moyers at the United States Military Academy on November 15, 2006.

Many of you will be heading for Iraq. I have never been a soldier myself, never been tested under fire, never faced hard choices between duty and feeling, or duty and conscience, under deadly circumstances. I will never know if I have the courage to be shot at, or to shoot back, or the discipline to do my duty knowing the people who dispatched me to kill—or be killed—had no idea of the moral abyss into which they were plunging me.

I have tried to learn about war from those who know it best: veterans, the real experts. But they have been such reluctant reporters of the experience. My father-in-law, Joe Davidson, was 37 years old with two young daughters when war came in 1941; he enlisted and served in the Pacific but I never succeeded in getting him to describe what it was like to be in harm's way. My uncle came home from the Pacific after his ship had been sunk, taking many friends down with it, and he would look away and change the subject when I asked him about it. One of my dearest friends, who died this year at 90, returned from combat in Europe as if he had taken a vow of silence about the dark and terrifying things that came home with him, uninvited.

Curious about this, some years ago I produced for PBS a documentary called "D-Day to the Rhine." With a camera crew I accompanied several veterans of World War II who for the first time were returning together to the path of combat that carried them from the landing at Normandy in 1944 into the heart of Germany. Members of their families were along this time—wives, grown sons and daughters—and they told me that until now, on this trip—45 years after D-Day—their husbands and fathers rarely talked about their combat experiences. They had come home, locked their memories in their mind's attic, and hung a "no trespassing" sign on it. Even as they retraced their steps almost half a century later, I would find these aging GIs, standing alone and silent on the very spot where a buddy had been killed, or they themselves had killed, or where they had been taken prisoner, a German soldier standing over them with a Mauser pointed right between their eyes, saying: "For you, the war is over." As they tried to tell the story, the words choked in their throats. The stench, the vomit, the blood, the fear: What outsider—journalist or kin—could imagine the demons still at war in their heads?

What I remember most vividly from that trip is the opening scene of the film: Jose Lopez— the father of two, who had lied about his age to get into the Army (he was too old), went ashore at Normandy, fought his way across France and Belgium with a water-cooled machine gun, rose to the rank of sergeant, and received the Congressional Medal of Honor after single-handedly killing 100 German troops in the Battle of the Bulge—Jose Lopez, back on Omaha Beach at age 79, quietly saying to me: "I was really very, very afraid. That I want to scream. I want to cry and we see other people was laying wounded and screaming and everything and it's nothing you could do. We could see them groaning in the water and we keep walking"—and then, moving away from the camera, dropping to his knees, his hands clasped, his eyes wet, as it all came back, memories so excruciating there were no words for them.

The Poetry Of War

Over the year I turned to the poets for help in understanding the realities of war; it is from the poets we outsiders most often learn what you soldiers experience. I admired your former superintendent, General William Lennox, who held a doctorate in literature and taught poetry classes here because, he said,

"poetry is a great vehicle to teach cadets as much as anyone can what combat is like." So it is. From the opening lines of the *Iliad:*

Rage, Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' Son Achilles...hurling down to the House of Death so many souls, great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion for the dogs and birds....to Wilfred Owen's pained cry from the trenches of France:

I am the enemy you killed, my friend...

to W. D. Ehrhart's staccato recitation of the

Barely tolerable conglomeration of mud, heat, sweat, dirt, rain, pain, fear...we march grinding under the weight of heavy packs, feet dialed to the ground...we wonder...

Poets with their empathy and evocation open to bystanders what lies buried in the soldier's soul. Those of you soon to be leading others in combat may wish to take a metaphorical detour to the Hindenburg Line of World War I, where the officer and poet Wilfred Owen, a man of extraordinary courage who was killed a week before the Armistice, wrote: "I came out in order to help these boys—directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can."

People in power should be required to take classes in the poetry of war. As a presidential assistant during the early escalation of the war in Vietnam, I remember how the President blanched when the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said it would take one million fighting men and 10 years really to win in Vietnam, but even then the talk of war was about policy, strategy, numbers and budgets, not severed limbs and eviscerated bodies.

That experience, and the experience 40 years later of watching another White House go to war, also relying on inadequate intelligence, exaggerated claims and premature judgments, keeping Congress in the dark while wooing a gullible press, cheered on by partisans, pundits, and editorial writers safely divorced from realities on the ground, ended any tolerance I might have had for those who advocate war from the loftiness of the pulpit, the safety of a laptop, the comfort of a think tank, or the glamour of a television studio. Watching one day on C-Span as one member of Congress after another took to the floor to praise our troops in Iraq, I was reminded that I could only name three members of Congress who have a son or daughter in the military. How often we hear the most vigorous argument for war from those who count on others of valor to fight it. As General William Tecumseh Sherman said after the Civil War: "It is only those who have neither fired a shot nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded who cry aloud for blood, more vengeance, more desolation."

Remembering Emily Perez

Rupert Murdoch comes to mind—only because he was in the news last week talking about Iraq. In the months leading up to the invasion Murdoch turned the dogs of war loose in the corridors of his media empire, and they howled for blood, although not their own. Murdoch himself said, just weeks before the invasion, that: "The greatest thing to come of this to the world economy, if you could put it that way [as you can, if you are a media mogul], would be $20 a barrel for oil." Once the war is behind us, Rupert Murdoch said: "The whole world will benefit from cheaper oil which will be a bigger stimulus than anything else."

Today Murdoch says he has no regrets, that he still believes it was right "to go in there," and that "from a historical perspective" the U.S. death toll in Iraq was "minute."

"Minute."

The word richoted in my head when I heard it. I had just been reading about Emily Perez. Your Emily Perez: Second Lieutenant Perez, the first woman of color to become a command sergeant major in the history of the Academy, and the first woman graduate to die in Iraq. I had been in Washington when word of her death made the news, and because she had lived there before coming to West Point, the Washington press told us a lot about her. People remembered her as "a little superwoman"—straight A's, choir member, charismatic, optimistic, a friend to so many; she had joined the medical service because she wanted to help people. The obituary in the Washington Post said she had been a ball of fire at the Peace Baptist Church, where she helped start an HIV-AIDS ministry after some of her own family members contracted the virus. Now accounts of her funeral here at West Point were reporting that some of you wept as you contemplated the loss of so vibrant an officer.

"Minute?" I don't think so. Historical perspective or no. So when I arrived today I asked the Academy's historian, Steve Grove, to take me where Emily Perez is buried, in Section 36 of your cemetery, below Storm King Mountain, overlooking the Hudson River. Standing there, on sacred American soil hallowed all the more by the likes of Lieutenant Perez so recently returned, I thought that to describe their loss as "minute"—even from a historical perspective—is to underscore the great divide that has opened in America between those who advocate war while avoiding it and those who have the courage to fight it without ever knowing what it's all about.

We were warned of this by our founders. They had put themselves in jeopardy by signing the Declaration of Independence; if they had lost, that parchment could have been their death warrant, for they were traitors to the Crown and likely to be hanged. In the fight for freedom they had put themselves on the line—not just their fortunes and sacred honor but their very persons, their lives. After the war, forming a government and understanding both the nature of war and human nature, they determined to make it hard to go to war except to defend freedom; war for reasons save preserving the lives and liberty of your citizens should be made difficult to achieve, they argued. Here is John Jay's passage in Federalist No. 4:

It is too true, however disgraceful it may be to human nature, that nations in general will make war whenever they have a prospect of getting anything by it; nay, absolute monarchs will often make war when their nations are to get nothing by it, but for the purposes and objects merely personal, such as thirst for military glory, revenge for personal affronts, ambition, or private compacts to aggrandize or support their particular families or partisans. These and a variety of other motives, which affect only the mind of the sovereign, often lead him to engage in wars not sanctified by justice or the voice and interests of his people.

And here, a few years later, is James Madison, perhaps the most deliberative mind of that generation in assaying the dangers of an unfettered executive prone to war:

In war, a physical force is to be created, and it is the executive will which is to direct it. In war, the public treasures are to be unlocked, and it is the executive hand which is to dispense them. In war, the honors and emoluments of office are to be multiplied; and it is the executive patronage under which they are to be enjoyed. It is in war, finally, that laurels are to be gathered; and it is the executive brow they are to encircle. The strongest passions and most dangerous weaknesses of the human breast; ambition, avarice, vanity, the honorable or venial love of fame, are all in conspiracy against the desire and duty of peace.

I want to be clear on this: Vietnam did not make me a dove. Nor has Iraq; I am no pacifist. But they have made me study the Constitution more rigorously, both as journalist and citizen. Again, James Madison:

In no part of the Constitution is more wisdom to be found, than in the clause which confides the question of war and peace to the legislature, and not to the executive department. Beside the objection to such a mixture to heterogeneous powers, the trust and the temptation would be too great for any one man.

Twice in 40 years we have now gone to war paying only lip service to those warnings; the first war we lost, the second is a bloody debacle, and both rank among the great blunders in our history. It is impossible for soldiers to sustain in the field what cannot be justified in the Constitution; asking them to do so puts America at war with itself. So when the Vice President of the United States says it doesn't matter what the people think, he and the President intend to prosecute the war anyway, he is committing heresy against the fundamental tenets of the American political order.

An Army Born In Revolution

This is a tough subject to address when so many of you may be heading for Iraq. I would prefer to speak of sweeter things. But I also know that 20 or 30 years from now any one of you may be the Chief of Staff or the National Security Adviser or even the President—after all, two of your boys, Grant and Eisenhower, did make it from West Point to the White House. And that being the case, it's more important than ever that citizens and soldiers—and citizen-soldiers—honestly discuss and frankly consider the kind of country you are serving and

the kind of organization to which you are dedicating your lives. You are, after all, the heirs of an army born in the American Revolution, whose radicalism we consistently underestimate.

No one understood this radicalism—no one in uniform did more to help us define freedom in a profoundly American way—than the man whose monument here at West Point I also asked to visit today—Thaddeus Kosciuszko. I first became intrigued by him over 40 years ago when I arrived in Washington. Lafayette Park, on Pennsylvania Avenue, across from the White House, hosts several statues of military heroes who came to fight for our independence in the American Revolution. For seven years, either looking down on these figures from my office at the Peace Corps, or walking across Lafayette Park to my office in the White House, I was reminded of these men who came voluntarily to fight for American independence from the monarchy. The most compelling, for me, was the depiction of Kosciuszko. On one side of the statue he is directing a soldier back to the battlefield, and on the other side, wearing an American uniform, he is freeing a bound soldier, representing America's revolutionaries.

Kosciuszko had been born in Lithuania-Poland, where he was trained as an engineer and artillery officer. Arriving in the 13 colonies in 1776, he broke down in tears when he read the Declaration of Independence. The next year, he helped engineer the Battle of Saratoga, organizing the river and land fortifications that put Americans in the stronger position. George Washington then commissioned him to build the original fortifications for West Point. Since his monument dominates the point here at the Academy, this part of the story you must know well.

But what many don't realize about Kosciuszko is the depth of his commitment to republican ideals and human equality. One historian called him "a mystical visionary of human rights." Thomas Jefferson wrote that Kosciuszko was "as pure a son of liberty as I have ever known." That phrase of Jefferson's is often quoted, but if you read the actual letter, Jefferson goes on to say: "And of that liberty which is to go to all, and not to the few and the rich alone."

There is the clue to the meaning of freedom as Thaddeus Kosciuszko saw it.

After the American Revolution, he returned to his homeland, what was then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In 1791 the Poles adopted their celebrated May Constitution—Europe's first codified national constitution (and the second oldest in the world, after our own.) The May Constitution established political equality between the middle class and the nobility and also partially abolished serfdom by giving civil rights to the peasants, including the right to state protection from landlord abuses. The autocrats and nobles of Russia feared such reforms, and in 1794, when the Russians sought to prevent their spread by partitioning the Commonwealth, Kosciuszko led an insurrection. His untrained peasant forces were armed mostly with single-blade sickles, but they won several early battles in fierce hand-to- hand fighting, until they were finally overwhelmed. Badly injured, Kosciuszko was taken prisoner and held for two years in St. Petersburg, and that was the end of the Polish Commonwealth, which had stood, by the way, as one of Europe's leading centers of religious liberty.

Upon his release from prison, Kosciuszko came back to the United States and began a lasting friendship with Jefferson, who called him his "most intimate and beloved friend." In 1798, he wrote a will leaving his American estate to Jefferson, urging him to use it to purchase the freedom and education of his [Jefferson's] own slaves, or, as Jefferson interpreted it, of "as many of the children as bondage in this country as it should be adequate to." For this émigré, as for so many who would come later, the meaning of freedom included a passion for universal justice. In his Act of Insurrection at the outset of the 1794 uprising, Kosciuszko wrote of the people's "sacred rights to liberty, personal security and property." Note the term property here. For Jefferson's "pursuit of happiness" Kosciuszko substituted Locke's notion of property rights. But it's not what you think: The goal was not simply to protect "private property" from public interference (as it is taught today), but rather to secure productive property for all as a right to citizenship. It's easy to forget the difference when huge agglomerations of personal wealth are defended as a sacred right of liberty, as they are today with the gap between the rich and poor in America greater than it's been in almost one hundred years. Kosciuszko—General Kosciuszko, from tip to toe a military man—was talking about investing the people with productive resources. Yes, freedom

had to be won on the battlefield, but if freedom did not lead to political, social and economic opportunity for all citizens, freedom's meaning could not be truly realized.

Think about it: A Polish general from the old world, infusing the new nation with what would become the marrow of the American Dream. Small wonder that Kosciuszko was often called a "hero of two worlds" or that just 25 years ago, in 1981, when Polish farmers, supported by the Roman Catholic Church, won the right to form an independent union, sending shockwaves across the Communist empire, Kosciuszko's name was heard in the victory speeches—his egalitarian soul present at yet another revolution for human freedom and equal rights.

After Jefferson won the presidency in l800, Kosciuszko wrote him a touching letter advising him to be true to his principles: "do not forget in your post be always a virtuous Republican with justice and probity, without pomp and ambition—in a word be Jefferson and my friend." Two years later, Jefferson signed into being this professional officers school, on the site first laid out as a fortress by his friend, the general from Poland.

A Paradox Of Liberty

Every turn in American history confronts us with paradox, and this one is no exception. Here was Jefferson, known for his vigorous and eloquent opposition to professional armies, presiding over the establishment of West Point. It's a paradox that suits you cadets to a T, because you yourselves represent a paradox of liberty. You are free men and women who of your own free choice have joined an institution dedicated to protecting a free nation, but in the process you have voluntarily agreed to give up, for a specific time, a part of your own liberty. An army is not a debating society and neither in the field or in

headquarters does it ask for a show of hands on whether orders should be obeyed. That is undoubtedly a necessary idea, but for you it complicates the already tricky question of "the meaning of freedom."

I said earlier that our founders did not want the power of war to reside in a single man. Many were also dubious about having any kind of regular, or as they called it, "standing" army at all. Standing armies were hired supporters of absolute monarchs and imperial tyrants. The men drafting the Constitution were steeped in classical and historical learning. They recalled how Caesar in ancient times and Oliver Cromwell in more recent times had used the conquering armies they had led to make themselves dictators. They knew how the Roman legions had made and unmade emperors, and how Ottoman rulers of the Turkish Empire had supported their tyrannies on the shoulders of formidable elite warriors. Wherever they looked in history, they saw an alliance between enemies of freedom in palaces and in officer corps drawn from the ranks of nobility, bound by a warrior code that stressed honor and bravery—but also dedication to the sovereign and the sovereign's god, and distrust amounting to contempt for the ordinary run of the sovereign's subjects.

The colonial experience with British regulars, first as allies in the French and Indian Wars, and then as enemies, did not increase American respect for the old system of military leadership. Officers were chosen and promoted on the basis of aristocratic connections, commissions were bought, and ineptitude was too often tolerated. The lower ranks were often rootless alumni of jails and workhouses, lured or coerced into service by the paltry pay and chance of adventure—brutally hard types, kept in line by brutally harsh discipline.

Not exactly your model for the army of a republic of free citizens.

What the framers came up with was another novelty. The first battles of the Revolution were fought mainly by volunteer militia from the states, such as Vermont's Green Mountain Boys, the most famous militia then. They were gung-ho for revolution and flushed with a fighting spirit. But in the end they were no substitute for the better-trained regiments of the Continental line and the French regulars sent over by France's king after the alliance of 1778. The view nonetheless persisted that in times of peace, only a small permanent army would be needed to repel invasions—unlikely except from Canada—and deal with the frontier Indians. When and if a real crisis came, it was believed, volunteers would flock to the colors like the armed men of Greek mythology who sprang from dragon's teeth planted in the ground by a divinely approved hero. The real safety of the

nation in any hour of crisis would rest with men who spent most of their working lives behind the plow or in the workshop. And this was long before the huge conscript armies of the 19th and 20th centuries made that a commonplace fact.

And who would be in the top command of both that regular force and of volunteer forces when actually called into federal service? None other than the top elected civil official of the government, the President. Think about that for a moment. The professional army fought hard and long to create a system of selecting and keeping officers on the basis of proven competence, not popularity. But the highest commander of all served strictly at the pleasure of the people and had to submit his contract for renewal every four years.

And what of the need for trained and expert leadership at all the levels of command which quickly became apparent as the tools and tactics of warfare grew more sophisticated in a modernizing world? That's where West Point came in, filling a need that could no longer be ignored. But what a special military academy it was! We tend to forget that the West Point curriculum was heavily tilted toward engineering; in fact, it was one of the nation's first engineering colleges and it was publicly supported and free. That's what made it attractive to young men like Hiram Ulysses Grant, familiarly known as "Sam," who wasn't anxious to be a soldier but wanted to get somewhere more promising than his father's Ohio farm. Hundreds like Grant came to West Point and left to use their civil engineering skills in a country badly needing them, some in

civil life after serving out an enlistment, but many right there in uniform. It was the army that explored, mapped and surveyed the wagon and railroad routes to the west, starting with the Corps of Exploration under Lewis and Clark sent out by the protean Mr. Jefferson. It was the army that had a hand in clearing rivers of snags and brush and building dams that allowed steamboats to avoid rapids. It was the army that put up lighthouses in the harbors and whose exhaustive geologic and topographic surveys were important contributions to publicly supported scientific research—AND to economic development—in the young republic.

All of this would surely have pleased General Kosciuszko, who believed in a society that leaves no one out. Indeed, add all these facts together and what you come up with is a portrait of something new under the sun—a peacetime army working directly with and for the civil society in improving the nation so as to guarantee the greater opportunities for individual success inherent in the promise of democracy. And a wartime army in which temporary citizen-solders were and still are led by long-term professional citizen- soldiers who were molded out of the same clay as those they command. And all of them led from the top by the one political figure chosen by the entire national electorate. This arrangement—this bargain between the men with the guns and the citizens who provide the guns—is the heritage passed on to you by the revolutionaries who fought and won America's independence and then swore fidelity to a civil compact that survives today, despite tumultuous moments and perilous passages.

West Point's Importance

Once again we encounter a paradox: Not all our wars were on the side of freedom. The first that seriously engaged the alumni of West Point was the Mexican War, which was not a war to protect our freedoms but to grab land—facts are facts—and was not only bitterly criticized by part of the civilian population, but even looked on with skepticism by some graduates like Grant himself. Still, he not only fought well in it, but it was for him, as well as for most of the generals on both sides in the impending Civil War, an unequalled training school and rehearsal stage.

When the Civil War itself came, it offered an illustration of how the meaning of freedom isn't always easy to pin down. From the point of view of the North, the hundreds of Southern West Pointers who resigned to fight for the Confederacy—Robert E. Lee included—were turning against the people's government that had educated and supported them. They were traitors. But from the Southern point of view, they were fighting for the freedom of their local governments to leave the Union when, as they saw it, it threatened their way of life. Their way of life tragically included the right to hold other men in slavery.

The Civil War, nonetheless, confirmed the importance of West Point training. European military observers were amazed at the skill with which the better generals on both sides, meaning for the most part West Pointers and

not political appointees, maneuvered huge armies of men over vast areas of difficult terrain, used modern technologies like the railroad and the telegraph to coordinate movements and accumulate supplies, and made the best use of newly developed weapons. The North had more of these advantages, and when the final victory came, adulation and admiration were showered on Grant and Sherman, who had come to a realistic and unromantic understanding of modern war, precisely because they had not been steeped in the mythologies of a warrior caste. Their triumph was seen as vindication of how well the army of a democracy could work. Just as Lincoln, the self-educated rail-splitter, had provided a civilian leadership that also proved him the equal of any potentate on the globe.

After 1865 the army shrank as its chief engagement was now in wiping out the last vestiges of Indian resistance to their dispossession and subjugation: One people's advance became another's annihilation and one of the most shameful episodes of our history. In 1898 the army was briefly used for the first effort in exporting democracy—an idea that does not travel well in military transports—when it warred with

Spain to help the Cubans complete a war for independence that had been in progress for three years. The Cubans found their liberation somewhat illusory, however, when the United States made the island a virtual protectorate and allowed it to be ruled by a corrupt dictator.

Americans also lifted the yoke of Spain from the Filipinos, only to learn that they did not want to exchange it for one stamped 'Made in the USA.' It took a three-year war, during which the army killed several thousand so-called "insurgents" before their leader was captured and the Filipinos were cured of the illusion that independence meant...well, independence. I bring up these reminders not to defame the troops. Their actions were supported by a majority of the American people even in a progressive phase of our political history (though there was some principled and stiff opposition.) Nonetheless, we have to remind ourselves that the armed forces can't be expected to be morally much better than the people who send them into action, and that when honorable behavior comes into conflict with racism, honor is usually the loser unless people such as yourself fight to maintain it.

Our brief participation in the First World War temporarily expanded the army, helped by a draft that had also proven necessary in the Civil War. But rapid demobilization was followed by a long period of ever- shrinking military budgets, especially for the land forces.

Not until World War II did the Army again take part in such a long, bloody, and fateful conflict as the Civil War had been, and like the Civil War it opened an entirely new period in American history. The incredibly gigantic mobilization of the entire nation, the victory it produced, and the ensuing 60 years of wars, quasi- wars, mini-wars, secret wars, and a virtually permanent crisis created a superpower and forever changed the nation's relationship to its armed forces, confronting us with problems we have to address, no matter how unsettling it may be to do so in the midst of yet another war.

The Bargain

The Armed Services are no longer stepchildren in budgetary terms. Appropriations for defense and defense-related activities (like veterans' care, pensions, and debt service) remind us that the costs of war continue long after the fighting ends. Objections to ever-swelling defensive expenditures are, except in rare cases, a greased slide to political suicide. It should be troublesome to you as professional soldiers that elevation to the pantheon of untouchable icons —right there alongside motherhood, apple pie and the flag—permits a great deal of political lip service to replace genuine efforts to improve the lives and working conditions—in combat and out—of those who serve.

Let me cut closer to the bone. The chickenhawks in Washington, who at this very moment are busily defending you against supposed "insults" or betrayals by the opponents of the war in Iraq, are likewise those who have cut budgets for medical and psychiatric care; who have been so skimpy and late with pay and with provision of necessities that military families in the United States have had to apply for food stamps; who sent the men and women whom you may soon be commanding into Iraq understrength, underequipped, and unprepared for dealing with a kind of war fought in streets and homes full of civilians against enemies undistinguishable from

non-combatants; who have time and again broken promises to the civilian National Guardsmen bearing much of the burden by canceling their redeployment orders and extending their tours.

You may or may not agree on the justice and necessity of the war itself, but I hope that you will agree that flattery and adulation are no substitute for genuine support. Much of the money that could be directed to that support has gone into high-tech weapons systems that were supposed to produce a new, mobile, compact "professional" army that could easily defeat the armies of any other two nations combined, but is useless in a war against nationalist or religious guerrilla uprisings that, like it or not, have some support,

coerced or otherwise, among the local population. We learned this lesson in Vietnam, only to see it forgotten or ignored by the time this administration invaded Iraq, creating the conditions for a savage sectarian and civil war with our soldiers trapped in the middle, unable to discern civilian from combatant, where it is impossible to kill your enemy faster than rage makes new ones.

And who has been the real beneficiary of creating this high-tech army called to fight a war conceived and commissioned and cheered on by politicians and pundits not one of whom ever entered a combat zone? One of your boys answered that: Dwight Eisenhower, class of 1915, who told us that the real winners of the anything at any price philosophy would be "the military-industrial complex."

I want to contend that the American military systems that evolved in the early days of this republic rested on a bargain between the civilian authorities and the armed services, and that the army has, for the most part, kept its part of the bargain and that, at this moment, the civilian authorities whom you loyally obey, are shirking theirs. And before you assume that I am calling for an insurrection against the civilian deciders of your destinies, hear me out, for that is the last thing on my mind.

You have kept your end of the bargain by fighting well when called upon, by refusing to become a praetorian guard for a reigning administration at any time, and for respecting civil control at all times. For the most part, our military leaders have made no serious efforts to meddle in politics. The two most notable cases were General George McClellan, who endorsed a pro-Southern and pro-slavery policy in the first year of the war and was openly contemptuous of Lincoln. But Lincoln fired him in 1862, and when McClellan ran for President two years later, the voting public handed him his hat. Douglas MacArthur's attempt to dictate his own China policy in 1951 ran head-on into the resolve of Harry Truman, who, surviving a firestorm of hostility, happily watched a MacArthur boomlet for the Republican nomination for the Presidency fizzle out in 1952.

On the other side of the ledger, however, I believe that the bargain has not been kept. The last time Congress declared war was in 1941. Since then presidents of the United States, including the one I served, have gotten Congress, occasionally under demonstrably false pretenses, to suspend Constitutional provisions that required them to get the consent of the people's representatives in order to conduct a war. They have been handed a blank check to send the armed forces into action at their personal discretion and on dubious Constitutional grounds.

Furthermore, the current President has made extra-Constitutional claims of authority by repeatedly acting as if he were Commander-in-Chief of the entire nation and not merely of the armed forces. Most dangerously to our moral honor and to your own welfare in the event of capture, he has likewise ordered the armed forces to violate clear mandates of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and the Geneva Conventions by claiming a right to interpret them at his pleasure, so as to allow indefinite and secret detentions and torture. These claims contravene a basic principle usually made clear to recruits from their first day in service—that they may not obey an unlawful order. The President is attempting to have them violate that longstanding rule by personal definitions of what the law says and means.

There is yet another way the chickenhawks are failing you. In the October issue of the magazine of the California Nurses Association, you can read a long report on "The Battle at Home." In veterans' hospitals across the country—and in a growing number of ill-prepared, under-funded psych and primary care clinics as well—the report says that nurses "have witnessed the guilt, rage, emotional numbness, and tormented flashbacks of GIs just back from Iraq." Yet "a returning vet must wait an average of 165 days for a VA decision

on initial disability benefits," and an appeal can take up to three years. Just in the first quarter of this year, the VA treated 20,638 Iraq veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder, and faces a backlog of 400,000 cases. This is reprehensible.

I repeat: These are not palatable topics for soldiers about to go to war; I would like to speak of sweeter things. But freedom means we must face reality: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." Free enough, surely, to think for yourselves about these breaches of contract that crudely undercut the traditions of an army of free men and women who have bound themselves voluntarily to serve the nation even unto death.

The Voice Of Conscience

What, then, can you do about it if disobedience to the chain of command is ruled out?

For one, you didn't give up your freedom to vote, nor did you totally quit your membership in civil society, when you put on the uniform, even though, as Eisenhower said, you did accept "certain inhibitions" at the time. He said that when questioned about MacArthur's dismissal, and he made sure his own uniform was back in the trunk before his campaign in 1952. It has been most encouraging, by the way, to see veterans of Iraq on the campaign trail in our recent elections.

Second, remember that there are limitations to what military power can do. Despite the valor and skills of our fighting forces, some objectives are not obtainable at a human, diplomatic, and financial cost that is acceptable. Our casualties in Iraq are not "minute" and the cost of the war has been projected by some sources to reach $2 trillion dollars. Sometimes, in the real world, a truce is the most honorable solution to conflict. Dwight Eisenhower—who is a candidate for my favorite West Point graduate of the 20th century—knew that when, in 1953, he went to Korea and accepted a stalemate rather than carrying out his bluff of using nuclear weapons. That was the best that could be done and it saved more years of stalemate and casualties. Douglas MacArthur announced in 1951 that "there was no substitute for victory." But in the wars of the 21st century there are alternative meanings to victory and alternative ways to achieve them. Especially in tracking down and eliminating terrorists, we need to change our metaphor from a "war on terror"—what, pray tell, exactly is that?—to the mindset of Interpol tracking down master criminals through intense global cooperation among nations, or the FBI stalking the Mafia, or local police determined to quell street gangs without leveling the entire neighborhood in the process. Help us to think beyond a "war on terror"—which politicians could wage without end, with no measurable way to judge its effectiveness, against stateless enemies who hope we will destroy the neighborhood, creating recruits for their side—to counter-terrorism modeled on extraordinary police work.

Third, don't let your natural and commendable loyalty to comrades-in-arms lead you into thinking that criticism of the mission you are on spells lack of patriotism. Not every politician who flatters you is your ally. Not every one who believes that war is the wrong choice to some problems is your enemy. Blind faith in bad leadership is not patriotism. In the words of G.K. Chesterton: "To say my country right or wrong is something no patriot would utter except in dire circumstance; it is like saying my mother drunk or sober." Patriotism means insisting on our political leaders being sober, strong, and certain about what they are doing when they put you in harm's way.

Fourth, be more prepared to accept the credibility and integrity of those who disagree about the war even if you do not agree with their positions. I say this as a journalist, knowing it is tempting in the field to denounce or despise reporters who ask nosy questions or file critical reports. But their first duty as reporters is to get as close as possible to the verifiable truth and report it to the American people—for your sake. If there is mismanagement and incompetence, exposing it is more helpful to you than paeans to candy given to the locals. I trust you are familiar with the study done for the Army in 1989 by the historian, William Hammond. He examined press coverage in Korea and Vietnam and found that it was not the cause of disaffection at home; what disturbed people at home was the death toll; when casualties jumped, public support dropped. Over time, he said, the reporting was vindicated. In fact, "the press

reports were often more accurate than the public statements of the administration in portraying the situation in Vietnam." Take note: The American people want the truth about how their sons and daughters are doing in Iraq and what they're up against, and that is a good thing.

Finally, and this above all—a lesson I wish I had learned earlier. If you rise in the ranks to important positions—or even if you don't—speak the truth as you see it, even if the questioner is a higher authority with a clear preference for one and only one answer. It may not be the way to promote your career; it can in fact harm it. Among my military heroes of this war are the generals who frankly told the President and his advisers that their information and their plans were both incomplete and misleading—and who paid the price of being ignored and bypassed and possibly frozen forever in their existing ranks: men like General Eric K. Shinseki, another son of West Point. It is not easy to be honest—and fair—in a bureaucratic system. But it is what free men and women have to do. Be true to your principles, General Kosciuszko reminded Thomas Jefferson. If doing so exposes the ignorance and arrogance of power, you may be doing more to save the nation than exploits in combat can achieve.

I know the final rule of the military Code of Conduct is already written in your hearts: "I am an American, fighting for freedom, responsible for my actions, and dedicated to the principles which made my country free..." The meaning of freedom begins with the still, small voice of conscience, when each of us decides what we will live, or die, for.

I salute your dedication to America and I wish all of you good luck.

Bill Moyers is deeply grateful to his colleagues Bernard A Weisberger, Professor Emeritus of History at The University of Chicago, and Lew Daly, Senior Fellow of the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy, for their contributions to this speech.

Bill Moyers is a veteran journalist, broadcaster, and author. Former managing editor of *Moyers & Company* and BillMoyers.com, his previous shows on PBS included NOW with Bill Moyers and Bill Moyers Journal. Over the past three and a half decades he has become an icon of American journalism and is the author of many books, including "*Bill Moyers Journal: The Conversation Continues," "Moyers on Democracy*," and "*Healing and the Mind*." He was one of the organizers of the Peace Corps, a special assistant for Lyndon B. Johnson, a publisher of Newsday, senior correspondent for CBS News, and a producer of many groundbreaking series on public television. He is the winner of more than 30 Emmys, nine Peabodys, three George Polk awards. Follow him on Twitter: @BillMoyers

Bill Moyers Southern Methodist University Commencement Address May 19, 2007

Thank you for this honor and for inviting me to participate in this occasion. It would be a privilege to receive your honorary degree anytime, but I am especially pleased to be on the same platform with Marsh Terry, a beacon from "High on the Hilltop" for all these years now, and Bill Solomon, whose business and civic contributions are laced with a deep social conscience. I am humbled to be standing between two originals – one in literature, the humanities and the classroom, and the other in corporate governance and community service.

I am, after all, just a journalist. I make my living explaining things I don't understand – a beachcomber on the shores of other people's experience and wisdom. Furthermore, I know just where journalists stand on the scale of approval in our country. Some years ago when I gave the commencement at another university, a young woman who had just graduated came up to me and said, "Mr. Moyers, you have been in both journalism and government. That makes everything you say twice as hard to believe."

So much for notoriety.

Thank you, President Gerald Turner, Faculty, and Trustees for temporarily elevating my status today.

To the graduating class I say: Fear not, I will be brief. I know you have worked hard to reach this point and are eager to get that parchment in your hand and head for the exit to celebrate. I will do my part to clear your path. In fact, your cell phones may be off but President Turner insisted I leave mine own so that he can call me if I go past the allotted l2 minutes.

Actually, I considered simply imitating one of the great humorists of my time, the late Bob Hope, who stood up at a commencement like this, looked out across the crowd, and said, "Graduates, its cruel world out there – ***DON'T GO!"*** And promptly sat down.

Because it is a cruel world out there, this is not the speech I intended to give today. I had intended a short, snappy summary of what to do with your education. You know the drill: Find something you love to do, and then put everything you have into that work. Don't take anything for granted, but apply yourself every day, and keep your mind open so the learning never stops. Follow your bliss when faced with hard decisions – listen to the still small voice only you can hear. Don't let material success or power fool you into giving up the simple human things you will cherish above all in the end. And yes – be lucky like me.

All this advice is l00% true, and I would like to leave it there. But I can't. As I was considering what to say to you, making notes and consulting colleagues, news arrived of the Virginia Tech massacre. As I watched the coverage and read the news I realized that I had to abandon the speech that I had been working on. Since then, I haven't been able to think about your commencement without also thinking about the commencement Virginia Tech went ahead and held a few days ago in the wake of the murders. I had given the commencement there some years ago. I'd had a wonderful time, reveling in the festivities of the weekend. I remember so well the

happy faces of parents, friends, and kin – faces like yours. These memories came rushing back as I watched coverage of the carnage. The community that had been so hospitable to me had become a slaughter house. So I have been asking myself what it would have been like to give the commencement there this month, before an audience stricken with grief and before chairs left empty by the fallen, instead of here at SMU.

I have pored over the obituaries of the victims, not from some macabre fascination but because I wanted to understand what we lost, and to try and grasp how their fathers and mothers and grandparents and brothers and sisters would be coping with profound personal loss when a ceremony of life has turned to mourning.

The family of Ryan Clark, for example. Friends called him "Stack."

He played baritone in Virginia Tech's marching band, served as its personnel officer, counseled children with special needs in summer camp, spent his Thanksgiving vacation in New Orleans helping relief victims, and maintained a 4.0 grade point average while majoring in biology and English. When he was shot that day he was on his way to help another student. What did we lose when we lost Ryan Clark?

Or Jarrett Lane. A skinny guy with the heart of a champion, according to his basketball coach. He won honors in four sports, played in the band, and had just been accepted to the master's program in engineering at the University of Florida. The day before the shooting, he went to his beloved Baptist church, walked quietly to the front, and prayed. What did we lose when we lost Jarrett Lane?

Or Julie Pryde. Julie Pryde had come up with a plan for the university to compost food waste generated in the dining halls instead of sending it to landfills. She wanted to complete her master's and go abroad to help the world's poor create clean water systems. She had a booming belly life, friends said; she felt things fully. What did we lose when we lost Julie Pryde?

Or Juan Ortiz, Rachael Hill, Henry Lee, Waleed Mohammud Shaalan, or Daniel Perez Cueva – and all the others?

I am not trying to spoil your day with dark portraits from another place. But as one of your own SMU students, Jamila Benkata, said after the slaughter at Virginia Tech, it could have happened here. It did happen at my alma mater, the University of Texas, in l966, ten years after I graduated. Nineteen dead, twice that many wounded. And it has happened at other universities over the years. I am not, however, trying to spoil your day. To the contrary, this moment, this time together is all the more hallowed by the remembrance of how precious life is, and how fragile and fleeting. I am an old man now, past his biblical three score and ten, and it is from long experience I tell you: Take hold of this day...pull it close...squeeze from it every drop of joy and camaraderie – for it's almost noon and already half over.

Trust me: The Black Swans in your life will come soon enough – "the dark birds of history" – dramatic, unpredictable events that break across our assumptions and ambitions and force us to reckon with the extreme, the malevolent, the unknown, and the improbable. I speak as one who

was born in the depths of the Great Depression, lived through World War II, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Vietnam War, two Iraqi wars, and 9/11, which occurred within sight of our offices in New York City. Over and again since 9/11, and more than once since the horror of Virginia Tech, I have gone back to my copy of Ernest Dowson's *Vitae Summa Brevis*:

They are not long/ the days of wine and roses/Out of a misty dream/Our path emerges for a while/then closes/Within a dream.

Ernest Dowson died at 33; his own days were not long. But you can live to be l00 and in the great procession of time, your life is no more than the blink of an eye, the span of a hand. It is not how long you live that determines the quality of your presence here but what you see with that eye and do with that hand. So once again: Seize the day, pull it close (and with it the people you love), squeeze the juices from it – and savor every sweet drop. I say this for the benefit of all 9000 of you here today, myself included. But I have something more to say just to the graduating class. Everyone else, pardon me while I speak just to them.

My young friends, you are not leaving here in ordinary times. The ancient Greeks had a word for a moment like this. They called it "kairos." Euripedes describes kairos as the moment when "the one who seizes the helm of fate, forces fortune." As I was coming here to Dallas today to ask what you are going to do to make the most of

your life, I thought: Please God, let me be looking in the face of some young man or woman who is going to transcend the normal arc of life, who is going one day to break through, inspire us, challenge us, and call forth from us the greatness of spirit that in our best moments have fired the world's imagination. You know the spirit of which I speak. Memorable ideas sprang from it: "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"..."created equal"... "Government of, by, and for the people"..."the only thing we have to fear is fear itself"..."I have a dream." Those were transformational epochs in American politics, brought forth by the founding patriots who won our independence, by Lincoln and his Lieutenants who saved the Union, by Franklin Roosevelt who saved capitalism and democracy, and by Martin Luther King, martyred in the struggle for equal rights. These moments would have been lost if left to transactional politics – the traditional politics of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." But moral leadership transcended the realities at hand and changed the course of our history.

Never have we been more in need of transformational leadership. America's a great promise but it's a broken promise.

It's not right that we are entering the fifth year of a war started on a suspicion. Whatever your party or politics, my young friends, America can't sustain a war begun under false pretenses because it is simply immoral to ask people to go on dying for the wrong reasons. We cannot win a war when our leaders don't have the will or courage to ask everyone to sacrifice, and place the burden on a few hundred thousand Americans from the working class led by a relative handful of professional officers. As is often said – America's not fighting the war; the American military is fighting the war, everyone else is at the mall. Our leaders are not even asking us to pay for it. They're borrowing the money and passing the IOU's to you and your kids.

America needs fixing. Our system of government is badly broken.

You are leaving here as our basic constitutional principles are under assault – the rule of law, an independent press, independent courts, the separation of church and state, and the social contract itself. I am sure you learned about the social contract here at SMU. It's right there in the Constitution – in the Preamble: "We, the People" – that radical, magnificent, democratic, inspired and exhilarating idea that we are in this together, one for all and all for one.

I believe this to be the heart of democracy. I know it to be a profoundly religious truth. Over in East Texas where I grew up, my father's greatest honor, as he saw it, was to serve as a deacon in the Central Baptist Church. In those days we Baptists were, in matters of faith, sovereign individualists: the priesthood of the believer, soul freedom, "Just you and me, Lord." But time and again, as my dad prayed the Lord's Prayer, I realized that it was never in the first person singular. It was always: "Give *us* this day *our* daily bread." We're all in this together; one person's hunger is another's duty.

Let me see if I can say it a different way. A moment ago, when the reunion class of l957 stood up to be recognized, I was taken back half a century to my first year at the University of Texas. In my mind's eye I saw Gilbert McAlister – "Dr. Mac" – pacing back and forth in his introductory class to anthropology. He had spent his years as a graduate student among the Apache Indians on the plains of Texas. He said he learned from them the meaning of reciprocity. In the Apache tongue, he told us, the word for grandfather was the same as the word for grandson. Generations were linked together by mutual obligation. Through the years, he went on; we human beings have advanced more from collaboration than competition. For all the chest-thumping about rugged individuals and self-made men, it was the imperative and ethic of cooperation that forged America. Laissez faire – "Leave me alone" – didn't work. We had to move from the philosophy of "Live and let live" to "Live and help live." You see, civilization is not a natural act. Civilization is a veneer of civility stretched across primal human appetites. Like democracy, civilization has to be willed, practiced, and constantly repaired, or society becomes a war of all against all.

Think it over: On one side of this city of Dallas people pay $69 for a margarita and on the other side of town the homeless scrounge for scraps in garbage cans. What would be the civilized response to such a disparity?

Think it over: In l960 the gap in wealth between the top 20% of our country and the bottom 20% was thirty fold. Now it is 75 fold. Stock prices and productivity are up, and CEO salaries are soaring, but ordinary workers aren't sharing in the profits they helped generate. Their incomes aren't keeping up with costs. More Americans live in poverty – 37 million, including l2 million children. *Twelve million children!* Despite extraordinary wealth at the top, America's last among the highly developed countries in each of seven measures of inequality. Our GDP outperforms every country in the world except Luxembourg. But among industrialized nations we are at the bottom in functional literacy and dead last in combating poverty. Meanwhile, regular Americans are working longer and harder than workers in any other industrial nation, but it's harder and harder for them to figure out how to make ends meet...how to send the kids to college...and how

to hold on securely in their old age. If we're all in this together, what's a civilized response to these disparities?

America's a broken promise. America needs fixing.

So I look out on your graduating class and pray some one or more of you will take it on. I know something about the DNA in this institution – the history that created this unique university. Although most of you are not Methodists, you can be proud of the Methodist in SMU. At the time of the American Revolution only a few hundred people identified with Methodism. By the Civil War it was the largest church in the country with one in three church members calling Methodism their faith community. No institution has done more to shape America's moral imagination. If America is going to be fixed, I believe someone with this DNA will be needed to do it. It's possible. So as you leave today, take with you Rilke's counsel "to assume our existence as broadly as we can, in any way we can. Everything, even the unheard of, must be possible in this life. The only courage demanded of us is courage for the most singular and the most inexplicable that we may encounter."

Some of the elders among you will remember that Martin Luther King made a powerful speech here at SMU in l966. It's been said – this part of the story may be apocryphal – that when he was asked why he chose SMU instead of one of the all-black colleges, Dr. King replied: "Because if John Wesley were around he'd be standing right here with me." Martin Luther King said at SMU: "...The challenge in the days ahead is to work passionately and unrelentingly...to make justice a reality for all people." One of your own graduates – the Reverend Michael Waters – got it right a few years ago when he was a student here: "Martin Luther King became the symbol not only of the civil rights movement but of America itself: A symbol of a land of freedom where people of all races, creeds, and nationalities could live together as a Beloved Community."

Not as an empire. Or a superpower. Not a place where the strong take what they can and the weak what they must. But a Beloved Community. It's the core of civilization, the crux of democracy, and a profound religious truth.

But don't go searching for the Beloved Community on a map. It's not a place. It exists in the hearts and minds – our hearts and minds – or not at all.

I pray I am looking into the face of someone who will lead us toward it. Good luck to each and every one of you.