

Today's students hooked on sonics

I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A FIRM BELIEVER IN THE saying "readers make writers." Like any occupation that involves copious amounts of practice, writing, too, requires its fair share of training.

Recently, the University of Alberta has implemented a comprehensive six-class, 18-hour course entitled "Writing for University" that covers various aspects of essay writing. It's aimed at high-school graduates who've received a grade of less than 70 per cent in English 30.

This is an excellent solution for those who lack essential writing skills; after all, writing isn't everyone's bag, and the course is sure to boost confidence levels in those who require it. However, wherever a brilliant answer is born, there must have been a problem to begin with.

Just the other day, my brother asked me whether or not he could download *Pride and Prejudice* so he wouldn't have to read it for his English class. More and more, people are opting to get their daily news via Podcasts, as well as listening to the exciting adventures of Mr Harry Potter via audiobooks on to their iPod.

For many people, their lives are way too busy to sit, have a cup of coffee and read the paper every day. They need to be able to get the latest scoop as they drive to work, one hand on the wheel and the other holding a travel mug. We students want to listen to our textbooks while we ride the bus in the morning, then work our part-time jobs or maybe watch some television when we get home from school. In other words, we don't read media anymore, we just listen to it.

Dose was one of those daily commuter rags that tried to tackle this problem by creating a free daily "paper," with short snippets of articles that could be read within a matter of seconds. Sadly, Dose failed, mainly because there wasn't any future in print media.

The 26 August issue of the *Economist* tackled this topic, stating that Internet-based information is becoming more and more accessible and popular; this in turn creates a huge influx of advertisers vying for digital space rather than the more palpable ink-on-paper medium. As a result, paying for advertisements in newspapers is becoming less and less beneficial.

Because high-school kids with their iPods aren't reading print media—or anything else printed for that matter—they're, in a sense, no longer learning to write either, and as a result, programs such as "Writing for University" need to be implemented. There's only so much a high-school teacher can do to instruct a student about the English language. Writing requires practice, and part of that practice includes reading: spelling skills come about as a result of sight recognition and familiarity, as does syntax and style.

With the shift from print to digital media and from visual to auditory information gathering, writing is becoming—and will continue to become—a lost art. Newspapers and books may have survived the first blow from the advent of television, but it's unlikely that they'll come out in one piece this time around. As a result, it's doubtful that current and future students' writing skills will be salvageable.

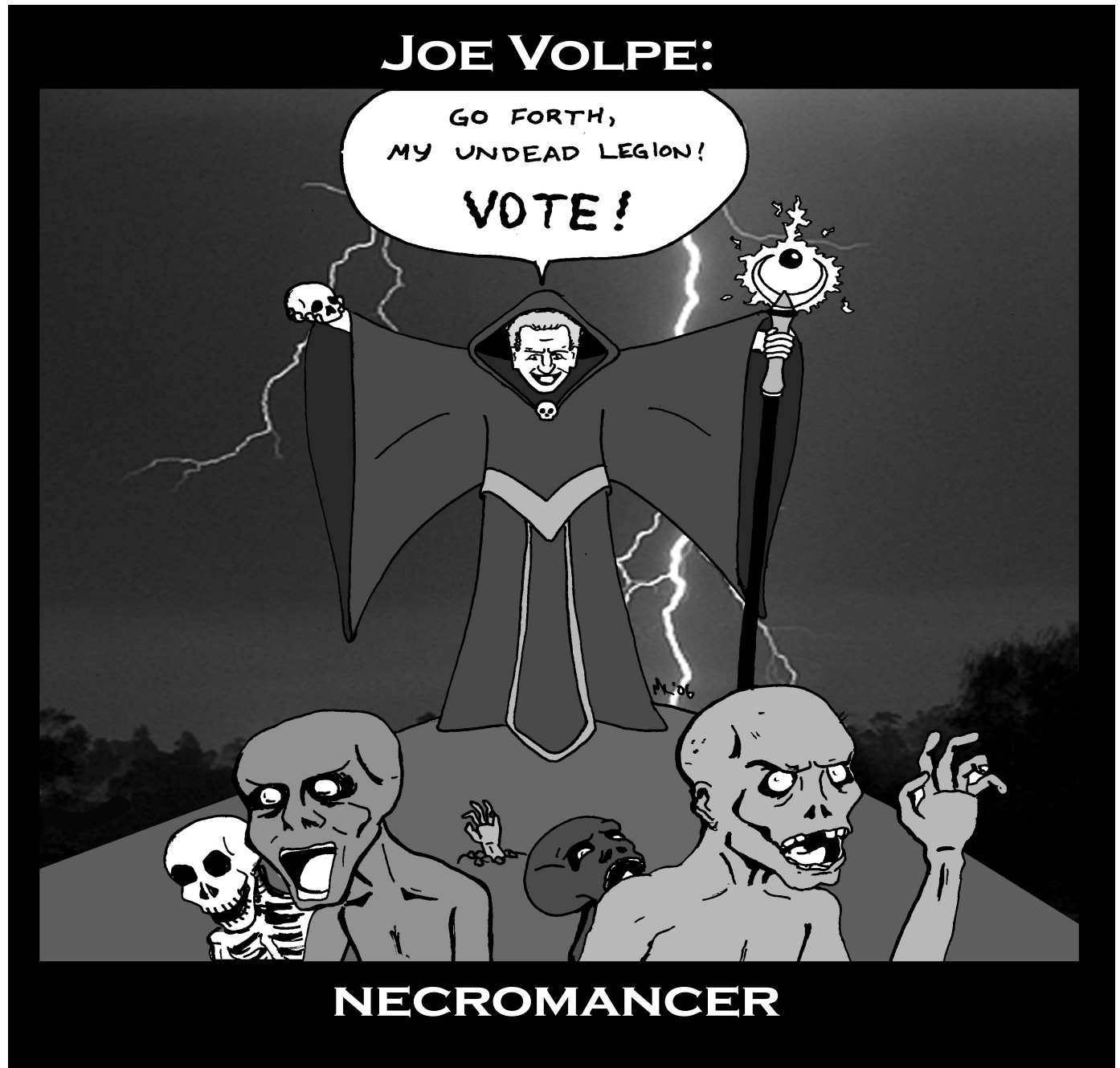
At the moment, our society values technology and medicine more than the fine arts, but I don't think this is the cause for declining literary skills amongst students these days. Society is simply shifting towards a new era. The question, then, is whether or not the shift from visual to audio information is a good thing. Technology may make our lives easier, but it also tends to breed a significant amount of laziness in its users. For me, I'm going to stick to reading rather than listening to Podcasts, not because it gives me a healthy aura of verbosity, but because it provides me with a weapon that everyone else simply passes by.

AMANDA ASH
Arts & Entertainment Editor

To the Deutsche Oper

Rue the day Mozart
Can't play because terrorists
Like to blow stuff up

MATT FREHNER
Poet



LETTERS

Scrooge-like student salaries don't suffice

If the University wants to attract and keep students, the least they can do is start by paying their graduate students the minimum pay rates specified in the Graduate Student Collective Bargaining Agreement (re: U of A focuses on 'top student' market," 26 September). That document states that any graduate student who works 36 hours or more per week is entitled to \$1550 per month in compensation. However, there's currently nothing stopping professors from paying students for fewer hours than they actually work. I'm currently in a situation where I've consistently worked more than 36 hours in a week, and yet I only get paid for 27. Because I'm above the minimum pay rate for 27 hours, I have been told I have no recourse to get my pay increased.

Furthermore, should I attempt to supplement my paltry salary by taking a teaching assistant position, my base salary will be decreased by an amount equal to my TA pay. So, for example, if I took a four-hour marking job that pays \$516 per month, my \$1160 research salary will be reduced to \$644, leaving my total compensation unchanged. So, for the 36 hours that I work on research, I will get paid a staggering \$4.50 per hour instead of the \$10.75 per hour I should be entitled to. Not all professors do this, but under the current Collective Bargaining Agreement, there is nothing to prevent it. In my case, I've been assured that it will happen.

According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement I'm being paid in "intangible benefits." It's a good thing my parents accept "intangible benefits" in lieu of rent, because I haven't found anybody else that would.

PHILLIP A MARSHALL
Graduate Studies

Letters fail to resolve Middle East conflict

Let me first say that I support no operation that targets civilians, no matter who it is committed by. That being said, it's faulty to put the blame squarely on one side for what happened in Qana (re: "Second-hand account too subjective as well," 26 September).

Reconnaissance video clearly shows that the building hit was in close proximity to a Katyusha launcher, so while Benjamin [Cleveland] is lecturing me on international law, I would direct him to the articles prohibiting the use of human shields. The 28 dead in Qana reported by Human Rights Watch (contrary to the initial reports of 60 that Benjamin is citing) should have been avoided by the IDF [Israel Defense Forces], but also could have been avoided if Hezbollah cared more about innocent Lebanese than they did [about] killing Israelis. A clear distinction must be made between those intentionally targeting civilians, and those who spend significant effort minimizing collateral damage.

Again, I would suggest that before Benjamin labels someone a liar, he do the necessary research that would show the facts. Benjamin's assertion

that Hezbollah's Katyusha Rocket fire was in response to the initial Israeli artillery fire is factually incorrect.

According to the Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the crisis started around 9am local time, when "Hezbollah launched several rockets from Lebanese territory across the withdrawal line" aimed at the Israeli town of Zarit, while, "In parallel, Hezbollah fighters crossed the Blue Line into Israel and attacked an IDF patrol." These two Hezbollah offences were in fact internationally recognized acts of war on Israel.

I will reiterate the point I made in my last letter, that as a democratic country, the Israeli Defense Forces had a clear mandate to protect its citizens by targeting Hezbollah positions (often in residential neighbourhoods) and cutting off the routes to transport the kidnapped soldiers out of Lebanon. This is an action that we as Canadians would also expect from our Government and Military in the face of an unprovoked attack on our soil from a neighbor.

Benjamin deceptively mentions the failed implementation of UN Resolution 242 (which I support as part of a peace plan) calling for the withdrawal of territory captured in the 1967 War as a failure by Israel, but falters in comprehending the full text of the Resolution. Resolution 242 calls for the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territories, however it does not call for an unconditional withdrawal. The second, and conveniently rarely mentioned provision of Resolution 242, is that it calls for states to grant the right to "live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts

of force" to go along with the return of occupied land.

Unfortunately, where Resolution 242 runs into a brick wall is that these offers of land return by Israel (1991, 2000) have not been accompanied by a commitment to eliminate the threat of violence on Israelis by Palestinian terrorist groups. In fact, in 2000, Ehud Barak's generous peace offer to the Palestinians was countered by Yasser Arafat with the Second Intifada, spilling more blood on both sides.

So thank you for your offer of help Benjamin, but I will continue to express my opinion using facts to back up my words, while refusing to stoop to half-truths and personal jabs. Maybe this is just the "hypocritical apologist" in me, but I believe that one day Israelis and Palestinians can coexist in two states they can call their own, free from the threat of violence.

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Jewish Students Association

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Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words (ahem), and should include the name, student identification number, program and year of study of the author.