[1] The joy of laughing at a funny story isuniversal, probably as old as language itself. But, what is it that makes a story or a joke funny?

[2] As one who has enjoyed humor since I first recognized it, I've made an attempt to explain and discuss humor with students in such diverse cultures as Latin America and China. I've done some serious thinking about funny stories. It has been a labor of love!

[3] Why is it that several students in a class will fall out of their chairs laughing after I tell a joke while the rest of the students look as if I've just read the weather report? Obviously some people are more sensitive to humor than others. And, we recognize that some people tell jokes very well while others struggle to say something funny. We've all heard people say, "I like jokes, but I can't tell one well, and I can never remember them." Some people have a better sense of humor than others just as some people have more musical talent, mathematical talent, etc. than others. A truly funny person has a joke for every occasion, and when one is told, that triggers an entire string of jokes from that person's memory bank. A humorless person is not likely to be the most popular person in a group. It is reasonable to say that the truly humorous individual is not only well liked, but is often the focus of attention in any gathering.

[4] Even some animals have a sense of humor. My wife's mother often visited us for extended stays. She normally didn't like dogs, but she fell in love withBlitzen—a female Lab we had, and the relationship was mutual. Even when young, Blitzen would tease Grandma by very selectively carrying one of her bedroom slippers into the living room where Grandma sat in her favorite, comfortable chair. Blitzen pranced just beyond the reach of Grandma until Grandma was tempted to leave her chair to get the slipper from Blitzen. When Grandma left her chair, Blitzen would quickly jump into the chair, flashing her Labsmile from sparkling brown eyes which clearly said, "Aha, I fooled you again."

[5] Typical jokes or humorous stories have a three-part anatomy that is easily recognized. First is the SETUP (or setting), next is the BODY (or story line), and these are followed by the PUNCH LINE (an unexpected or surprise ending) which will make the joke funny if it contains some humor. Usually all three parts are present, and each must be clearly presented. It helps if the story/joke teller uses gestures and language which are well known to the audience.

[6] Humor, as a form of entertainment, can be analyzed in order to discover what makes a funny story or joke seem funny. Here, for example, are some of the most common types of humor. They range from the most obvious humor to the more subtle types.

[7] "SLAP-STICK" is the most obvious humor. Its language is simple, direct, and often makes fun of another person or group. Slap-stick was and is the technique of the stand-up comedian and the clown. It appeals to all ages and all cultures. Nearly every English-speaking comedian in this century has used the following joke in one form or another. One man asks another, "Who was that lady I saw you with last night?" The other replies, "That was no lady, that was my wife."The humor lies in the fact that the second man is saying that his wife is not a lady.In other words, she is not a refined woman. The joke is no less funny because it is so often used. The audience knows in advance what will be said, because it is classic humor, and any audience values it even more because of its familiarity.

[8] Chinese "cross-talk" is a special type of slap-stick in which two Chinese comedians humorously discuss topics such as bureaucrats, family problems, or other personal topics. Cross-talk can be heard anywhere from small village stages to the largest Beijing theatres, and to radio and television. It is clearly a traditional form of humor well understood by Chinese people.

[9] A PLAY ON WORDS is not so obvious as slap-stick, but it is funny because of misused or misunderstood language. My favorite example is the story of three elderly gentlemen traveling by train in England. As the train slowed for a stop the first man asked, "Is this Wembley?" "No," said the second, "It's Thursday." "So am I," said the third man. "Let's stop for a beer." We know that older people often do not hear things clearly, so the misunderstanding of both Wednesday (for Wembley) and thirsty (for Thursday) makes a nice setup for the punch line delivered by the third man.

[10] The famous Chinese cartoonist and humorist Ding Cong is a master of word play. In one of his funny cartoons, a teacher says, "How come you completely copied somebody else's homework?" The young student replies, "I didn't completely copy it. My name on the page is different." In another classic Ding Cong cartoon, an irritated father asks, "Tell me, what's one plus two?" The son says, "I don't know." The impatient father then says, "For example, you, your mother, and I altogether are how many, you idiot?" The son proudly answers, "Three idiots." Whether these stories are cartoons or jokes, told by a slap-stickcomedian or a cross-talking team, they appeal to people everywhere as funny stories because they have a note  of reality to them, and the unexpected punch line is quite funny.

[11] PUNS are even more subtle forms of word play. They use the technique of similar sounding words or alternative meanings of the same word. Puns are thought by some critics to be the lowest form of humor, but I disagree with this.Puns require more subtle and sophisticated language skills than most humor forms, but even the very young can use them in their simpler forms. For example, the "riddle" or trick question often uses a pun in the setup, the story line, or, more often, the punch line. Puns are the first type of humor I learned, and at about 5 years of age I remember hearing the following riddle. One person asks, "What is black and white and red all over?" The other person usually cannot answer the riddle, so says, "I give up. What is the answer?" The riddler replies, "A newspaper."This is the obvious answer if one knows that "red" is pronounced the same as "read" in English, but the meanings are clearly different.

[12] DOUBLE ENTENDRES (French for double meanings) are special variations of puns in which words or phrases have double meanings.Frequently the two meanings are very different, and one is quite proper while the second is often, but not always, vulgar. I like the somewhat mild story of a school teacher and a principal of a high school who are concerned because some boys and girls have been seen kissing on the school playground. The teacher says to the students, "The principal and I have decided to stop kissing on the school playground." Hearing some laughter, she senses her message was not altogether clear, so she adds, "What I mean to say is that there will be no more kissing going on under our noses." This clarification, of course, does nothing to correct the first statement and the double meaning of the joke becomes even more laughable.

[13] Some professional humorists think too much of today's humor is not very intelligent or sophisticated. They dislike the suggestive or vulgar language used too frequently, and they feel that most humorists are not very creative. It is true that some of today's humor is rather shocking, but I don't think humor is to be blamed for that. Humor is alive and well, and it will persist simply because there are funny things happening every day. Some humorous people see and hear these funny things and are able to make them into funny, entertaining jokes and stories. (1,346 words)

On my first job as sports editor for the Montpelier (Ohio) Leader*Enterprise*, I didn't get a lot of fan mail, so I was intrigued by a letter that was dropped on my desk one morning.

[2] When I opened it, I read: "A nice piece of writing on the Tigers. Keep up the good work." It was signed by Don Wolfe, the sports editor. Because I was a teenager (being paid the grand total of 15 cents a column inch), his words couldn't have been more inspiring. I kept the letter in my desk drawer until it got rag-eared. Whenever I doubted I had the right stuff to be a writer, I wouldreread Don's note and feel confident again.

[3] Later, when I got to know him, I learned that Don **made a** **habit of** writing a quick, encouraging word to people in all walks of life. "When I make others feel good about themselves," he told me, "I feel good too."

[4] Not surprisingly, he had a body of friends as big as nearby Lake Erie.When he died last year at 75, the paper was flooded with calls and letters from people who had been recipients of his spirit-lifting words.

[5] Over the years, I've tried to copy the example of Don and other friends who care enough to write uplifting comments, because I think they are on to something important. In a world too often cold and unresponsive, such notes bring warmth and reassurance. We all need a boost from time to time, and a few lines of praise have been known to turn around a day, even a life.

[6] Why, then, are there so few upbeat note writers? My guess is that many who shy away from the practice are too self-conscious. They're afraid they'll be misunderstood, sound sentimental or insincere. Also, writing takes time; it's far easier to pick up the phone.

[7] The drawback with phone calls, of course, is that they don't last. A noteattaches more importance to our well-wishing. It is a matter of record, and our words can be read more than once, savored and treasured.

[8] Even though note writing may take longer, some pretty busy people do it, including George Bush. Some say he owes much of his success in politics to his ever-ready pen. How? Throughout his career he has **followed up** virtuallyevery contact with a cordial response—a compliment, a line of praise or a nod of thanks. His notes go not only to friends and associates, but to casual acquaintances and total strangers—like the surprised person who got a warm pat on the back for lending Bush an umbrella.

[9] Even top corporate managers, who have mostly affected styles of leadership that can be characterized only as tough, cold and aloof, have begun to learn the lesson, and earn the benefits, of writing notes that lift people **up**.Former Ford chairman Donald Peterson, who is largely credited for turning the company **round** in the 1980s, made it a practice to write positive messages to associates every day. "I'd just scribble them on a memo pad or the corner of a letter and **pass** them **along**," he says. "The most important ten minutes of your day are those you spend doing something to boost the people who work for you."

[10] "Too often," he observed, "people we genuinely like have no idea how we feel about them. Too often we think, I haven't said anything critical; why do I have to say something positive? We forget that human beings need positive reinforcement—in fact, we thrive on it!"

[11] What does it take to write letters that lift spirits and warm hearts? Only a willingness to express our appreciation. The most successful practitionersinclude what I call the four "S's" of note writing.

[12] 1) They are*sincere*. No one wants false praise.

[13] 2) They are usually short. If you can't say what you want to say in three sentences, you're probably straining.

[14] 3) They are specific. Complimenting a business colleague by telling him "good speech" is too vague; "great story about Warren Buffet's investmentstrategy" is precise.

[15] 4) They are*spontaneous*. This gives them the freshness and enthusiasm that will linger in the reader's mind long afterward.

[16] It's difficult to be spontaneous when you have to hunt for letter-writing materials, so I keep paper,envelopes and stamps close at hand, even when I travel. Fancy stationery isn't necessary; it's the thought that counts.

[17] So, who around you deservesa note of thanks or approval? A neighbor, your librarian, a relative, your mayor, your mate, a teacher, your doctor? You don't need to be poetic. If you need a reason, look for a milestone, the anniversary of a special event you shared, or a birthday or holiday. For the last 25 years, for example, I've prepared an annual Christmas letter for long-distance friends, and I often add a handwritten word of thanks or congratulations. Acknowledging some success or good fortune that has happened during the year seems particularly appropriate considering the spirit of the Christmas season.

[18] Be generous with your praise. Superlatives like "greatest", "smartest", "prettiest" make us all feel good. Even if your praise is a little ahead of reality, remember that expectations are often the parents of dreams fulfilled.

[19] Today I got a warm, complimentary letter from my old boss andmentor, Norman Vincent Peale. His little note to me was full of uplifting phrases, and it sent me to my typewriter to compose a few overdue letters of my own. I don't know if they will make anybody else's day, but they made mine. As my friend Don Wolfe said, making others feel good about themselves makes me feel good too. (978 words)

Over the past few decades, it has been proven innumerable times that the various types of behavior, emotions, and interests that constitute beingmasculine and feminine are patterned by both heredity and culture. In the process of growing up, each child learns hundreds of culturally patterned details of behavior that become incorporated into its gender identity. Some of this learning takes place directly. In other words, the child is told by others how to act in an appropriately feminine or masculine way. Other details of gender behavior are taught unconsciously, or indirectly, as the culture provides different images,aspirations, and adult models for girls and boys.

[2] Recently, for example, a study of American public schools showed that there is a cultural bias in education that favors boys over girls. According to the researchers, the bias is unintentional and unconscious, but it is there and it is influencing the lives of millions of schoolchildren every year. Doctors David and Myra Sadker videotaped classroom teachers in order to study sex-related bias in education.Their research showed that many teachers who thought they were nonsexist were amazed to see how biased they appeared on videotape. From nursery school topostgraduate courses, teachers were shown to call on males in class far more than on female students. This has a tremendous impact on the learning process for, in general, those students who become active classroom participants develop more positive attitudes and go on to higher achievement. As a matter of fact, in the late 1960s, when many of the best all-women's colleges in the northeastern United States opened their doors to male students, it was observed by professors and women students alike that the boys were "taking over" the classroom discussions and that activeparticipation by women students had diminished noticeably. A similarsubordination of female to male students has also been observed in law and medical school classrooms in recent years.

[3] Research done by the Sadkers showed that sometimes teachersunknowingly prevented girls from participating as actively as boys in class byassigning them different tasks in accordance with stereotyped gender roles. For instance, one teacher conducting a science class with nursery school youngsters, continually had the little boys perform the scientific "experiment"while the girls were given the task of putting the materials away. Since hands-on work with classroom materials is a very important aspect of early education, the girls were thus being deprived of a vital learning experience that would affect their entire lives.

[4] Another dimension of sex-biased education is the typical American teacher's assumption that boys will do better in the "hard", "masculine" subjects of math and science while girls are expected to have better verbal and reading skills. As an example of a self-fulfilling prophecy, American boys do, indeed, develop reading problems, while girls, who are superior to boys in math up to the age of nine, fall behind from then on. But these are cultural, not geneticpatterns. In Germany, for example, all studies are considered "masculine", and it is girls who develop reading problems. And in Japan, where early education appears to be nonsexist, both girls and boys do equally well in reading. 

[5] The different attitudes associated with the educational process for girls and boys begin at home. One study, for example, showed that whenpreschoolers were asked to look at a picture of a house and tell how far away from the house they were permitted to go, the boys indicated a much wider area than the girls, who generally pointed out a very limited area close to the home.Instead of being encouraged to develop intellectual curiosity and physical skills that are useful in dealing with the outside world, as boys are, girls are filled with fears of the world outside the home and with the desire to be approved of for their "goodness" and obedience to rules. These lessons carry over from the home to the classroom, where girls are generally observed to be more dependent on the teacher, more concerned with the form and neatness of their work than with its content, and more anxious about being "right" in their answers than in being intellectually independent, analytical, or original. Thus, through the educational process that occupies most of the child's waking hours, society reinforces its established values and turns out each sex in its traditional and expected mold. (722 words)

Creativity is the key to a brighter future, say education and business experts. Here is how schools and parents can encourage this vital skill in children.

[2] If Dick Drew had listened to his boss in 1925, we might not have a product that we now think of as practically essential: masking tape. Drew worked for the Minnesota Manufacturing and Mining Company, better known as 3M. At work he developed a sticky-side substance strong enough to hold things together. But his boss told him not to pursue the idea. Finally, using his own time, Drew perfected the tape, which now is used everywhere by many people. And his former company learned from its mistake:Now 3M encourages people to spend 15 percent of their work time just thinking and developing new ideas.

[3] It is a strategy that more and more companies are employing and one that experts around the country say we ought to be following with our children, both at home and at school. The feeling is that if we teach them to think creatively, they will be better able to function in tomorrow's society.

[4] Creativity's benefits reach beyond music and art. Successful students and adults are the ones who discover a number of ways to approach problems.

[5] Creativity is not something one is just born with, nor is it necessarily a characteristic of high intelligence. Just because a person is highly intelligent does not mean that he uses it creatively. Creativity is the matter of using the resources one has to produce original ideas that are good for something.

[6] Unfortunately, schools have not tended to promote creativity. With strong emphasis on test scores and the development of reading, writing and mathematical skills, many educators sacrifice creativity for correct answers.The result is that children can give back information but can't recognize ways to apply it to new situations. They may know their multiplication tables, for example, but they are unable to apply them to story problems.

[7] In some schools, however, educators are recognizing the problem and are developing new approaches to teaching which should encourage creativity in their students. Some teachers are combining the basics with activities where the students must use their imagination. For example, instead of simply asking WHEN Columbus discovered the New World, teachers might ask students to think about what would have happened if his trip had taken him to New York first instead of to the Caribbean area. With that question, students would have to use what they know about Columbus, what they know about New York, and what they know about the Caribbean. Teachers feel that even if the answers seem silly, it's OK, that sometimes being silly is an essential step toward creativity. In the classroom as well as at home, children must have the right to have crazy thoughts, experts say. Then it is up to parents and teachers to work with the children to develop those thoughts into workable ideas. The best strategy is to encourage children by asking them questions, meanwhile praising their ideas and new thoughts. Experts say that it is important to create an atmosphere in which there is no risk in being creative—a place where wild ideas are honored and valued, never scorned or dismissed.

[8] There are things that parents can do at home to encourage creativity.They can involve children in decision making if the problem is appropriate, asking the child for suggestions. Parents can help their children to understand the consequences of various decisions. Parents should also encourage their children to talk out loud about things they are doing. Thinking and language skills are closely related. Talking out loud improves language skills and thinking skills. 

[9] Having a sense of humor is also important in helping to develop creativity in a child. When parents show a sense of humor, children can see creativity in its purest form. By its nature, humor crosses conventional boundaries and breaks patterns. Creativity often does the same.

[10] It is important to give children choices. From the earliest age, children should be allowed to make decisions and understand their consequences. Even if it's choosing between two food items for lunch, decision-making helps thinking skills. As children grow older, parents should let their children decide how to use their time or spend their money but not automatically help them too much if they make the wrong decision. This may be confusing for the child, but that is all right. This is because one of the most important traits of creative people is a very strong motivation to make order out of confusion. (765 words)

 I love Charles Barkley like a brother, and except for the times when we're banging and pushing each other under the boards in games between my team, the Utah Jazz, and his, the Phoenix Suns, we're great friends. We don't necessarily like the same things: Charles loves golf so much he would play athalftime if he could, but I think a golf course is a waste of good pasture-land.One of the reasons we get along so well, though, is that we both say what's on our minds without worrying about what other people are going to think—which means we disagree from time to time. Here's an example of what I mean: I disagree with what Charles says in his Nike commercial, the one in which he insists, "I am not a role model." Charles, you can deny being a role model all you want, but I don't think it's your decision to make. We don't choose to be role models, we are chosen. Our only choice is whether to be a good role model or a bad one. 

[2] I don't think we can accept all the gloryand the money that comes with being a famousathlete and not accept the responsibility of being a role model, of knowing that kids and even some adults are watching us and looking for us to set an example. I mean, why do we getendorsements in the first place? Because there are people who will follow our lead and buy a certain sneaker or cereal because we use it.

[3] I love being a role model, and I try to be a positive one. That doesn't mean I always succeed. I'm no saint. I make mistakes, and sometimes I do childish things. And I don't always wake up in a great, role-model mood. There are days when I don't want to pose for a picture with every fan I run into, when I don't feel like picking up babies and giving them hugs and kisses (no matter how cute they are), those are the days I just try to avoid the public.

[4] But you don't have to be perfect to be a good role model, and people shouldn't expect perfection. If I were decidingwhether a basketball player was a positive role model, I would want to know: Does he influence people's lives in a positive way away from the court? How much has he given of himself, in time or in money, to help people who look up to him? Does he display the values—likehonesty and determination—that are part of being a good person? I wouldn't ask whether he lives his life exactly the way I would live it or whether he handles every situation just the way I would handle it.

[5] I do agree with Charles on one thing he says in his commercial: "Just because I can dunk a basketball doesn't mean I should raise your kids." But sometimes parents need a little assistance. There are times when it helps for a mother and father to be able to say to their kids, "Do you think Karl Malone or Scottie Pippen or Charles Barkley or David Robinson would do that?" To me, if someone uses my name in that way, it's an honor. Sure, parents should be role models to their children. But let's face it, kids have lots of other role models—teachers, movie stars, athletes, even other kids. As athletes, we can't take the place of parents, but we can help reinforce what they try to teach their kids.

[6] Parents just have to make sure they don't take it too far. Sometimes theyput us on a pedestal that feels more like a tightrope—so narrow that we're bound to fall off eventually. This is not something I'm especially proud of, but I've had parents in Utah say things to me like, "You know, Karl, in our family weworship the ground you walk on. In our house your picture is right up there on the wall beside Jesus Christ." Now, that's going too far. Is it any wonder some athletes don't want to be role models? Who wants to be held up to that kind ofimpossibly high standard? Imagine someone putting a life-sized picture of you on a wall and saying things to your picture before they go to bed. That's scary.

[7] Constantly being watched by the public can be hard to tolerate at times. I am sorry that Michael Jordan had to deal with the negative publicity he received about gambling. I don't think most people can imagine what it's like to be watched that closely every minute of every day. I was told once that it wouldn't be that bad for me because no one would know me outside of Utah, but that's not true. Ever since I played on the Dream Team in the Olympics, I can't go anywhere without being the center of attention, and that's very confining at times. For instance, there have been occasions when I've felt like buying a big Harley-Davidson motorcycle and riding it down the street. First, the Jazz would have a fit and say it's too dangerous. Second, everyone would be watching to see if I wore a helmet, if I was obeying the speed limit, if I was taking turns safely—you name it. The first time I didn't measure up to expectations, I would hear, "What kind of example is that to set for other people who ride motorcycles?" 

[8] But the good things about being a role model outweigh the bad. It's a great feeling to think you're a small part of the reason that a kid decided to give school another try instead of dropping out or that a kid had the strength to walk away when someone offered him drugs. But one thing I would encourage parents to do is to remind their kids that no matter which athletes they look up to, there are no perfect human beings. That way, if the kid's heroes should make mistakes, it won't seem like the end of the world to them.

[9] I would never criticize someone for saying what he thinks. If Charles doesn't consider himself a role model, that's certainly his right. But I think he is a role model—and a good one, too. And if he gets that NBA championship ring, I might just make him my role model. (1,090 words)

 At some time or other, all of us have played the part of a hypochondriac, imagining that we have some terrible disease on the strength of very minorsymptoms. Some people just have to hear about a new disease and they begin checking themselves to see if they may be suffering from it. But fear of disease is not our only fear, and neither is risk of disease the only risk we run. Modern life is full of all manner of threats—to our lives, our peace of mind, our families, and our future. And from these threats come questions that we must pose to ourselves: Is the food I buy safe? Are toys for my children likely to hurt them? Should my family avoid smoked meats? Am I likely to be robbed on vacations? Our uncertainties multiply indefinitely. 

[2] Anxiety about the risks of life is a bit like**hypochondria**; in both, the fear or anxiety feeds on partial information. But one sharp difference exists between the two. The hypochondriac can usually turn to a physician to get a definitiveclarification of the situation—either you have the suspected disease or you don't. It is much more difficult when anxiety about other forms of risk is concerned, because with many risks, the situation is not as simple.

[3] Risks are almost always a matter of probability rather than certainty.You may ask, "Should I wear a seat belt?" If you're going to have a head-on collision, of course. But what if you get hit from the side and end up trapped inside the vehicle, unable to escape because of a damaged seat belt mechanism? So does this mean that you should spend the extra money for an air bag? Again, in head-on collisions, it may well save your life. But what if the bag accidentally inflates while you are driving down the highway, thus causing an accident that would never have occurred otherwise?

[4] All of this is another way of saying that nothing we do is completely safe.There are risks, often potentially serious ones, associated with every hobby we have, every job we take, every food we eat—in other words, with every action. But the fact that there are risks associated with everything we are going to do does not, or should not, reduce us to trembling neurotics. Some actions are riskier than others. The point is to inform ourselves about the relevant risks and then actaccordingly.

[5] For example, larger cars are generally safer than small ones in collisions.But how much safer? The answer is that you are roughly twice as likely to die in a serious crash in a small car than in a large one. Yet larger cars generally cost more than small ones (and also use more gas, thus increasing the environmental risks!), so how do we decide when the reduced risks are worth the added costs?The ultimate risk avoider might, for instance, buy a tank or an armored car, thus minimizing the risk of death or injury in a collision. But is the added cost andinconvenience worth the difference in price, even supposing you could afford it? 

[6] We cannot begin to answer such questions until we have a feel for the level of risks in question. So how do we measure the level of a risk? Some people seem to think that the answer is a simple number. We know, for instance, that about 25,000 people per year die in automobile accidents. By contrast, only about 300 die per year in mine accidents anddisasters. Does that mean that riding in a car is much riskier than mining? Not necessarily. The fact is that some 200 million Americans regularly ride in automobiles in the United States every year; perhaps 700,000 are involved in mining. The relevant figure that we need to assess a risk is a ratio or fraction. The numerator of the fraction tells us how many people were killed or harmed as the result of a particular activity over a certain period of time; the denominator tells us how many people were involved in that activity during that time. All risk levels are thus ratios or fractions, with values between 0 (no risk) and 1 (totally risky).

[7] By reducing all risks to ratios or fractions of this sort, we can begin to compare different sorts of risks—like mining versus riding in a car. The larger this ratio, that is, the closer it is to 1, the riskier the activity in question. In the case just discussed, we would find the relative safety of car travel and coal mining by dividing the numbers of lives lost in each by the number of people participating in each. Here, it is clear that the riskiness of traveling by car is about 1 death per 10,000 passengers; with mining, the risk level is about 4 deaths per 10,000miners. So although far more people are killed in car accidents than in mining, the latter turns out to be four times riskier than the former. Those ratios enable us to compare the risks of activities or situations as different as apples and oranges.If you are opposed to risks, you will want to choose your activities by focusing on the small-ratio exposures. If you are reckless, then you are not likely to be afraid of higher ratios unless they get uncomfortably large.

[8] Once we understand that risk can never be totally eliminated from any situation and that, therefore, nothing is completely safe, we will then see that the issue is not one of avoiding risks altogether but rather one of managing risks in a sensible way. Risk management requires two things: common sense and information about the character and degree of the risks we may be running. (963 words)

 We the faculty take no pride in our educational achievement with you. We have prepared you for a world that does not exist, indeed, that cannot exist. You have spent four years supposing that failure leaves no record. You have learned at Brown that when your work goes poorly, the painless solution is to drop out. But starting now, in the world to which you go, failure marks you. Confronting difficulty by quitting leaves you changed. Outside Brown, quitters are no heroes.

[2] With us you could argue about why your errors were not errors, whymediocre work really was excellent, why you could take pride in routine andslipshod presentation. Most of you, after all, can look back on honor gradesfor most of what you have done. So, here grades can have meant little in distinguishing the excellent from the ordinary. But tomorrow, in the world to which you go, you had better not defend errors but learn from them. You will be ill-advised to demand praise for what does not deserve it, and abuse those who do not give it.

[3] For years we created an altogether forgiving world, in which whatever slight effort you gave was all that was demanded. When you did not keep appointments, we made new ones. When your work came in beyond the deadline, we pretended not to care.

[4] Worse still, when you were boring, we acted as if you were saying something important. When you weregarrulous and talked to hear yourselves talk, we listened as if it mattered.When you tossed on our desks writing upon which you had not labored, we read it and even responded, as though you earned a response. When you were dull, we pretended you were smart. When you were predictable,unimaginative and routine, we listened as if to new and wonderful things. When you demanded free lunch, we served it. And all this why?

[5] Despite your fantasies, it was not even that we wanted to be liked by you. It was that we did not want to be bothered, and the easy way out waspretense: smiles and easy Bs.

[6] It is conventional to quote in addresses such as these. Let me quote someone you've never heard of: Professor Carter A. Daniel, Rutgers University:   
  
"College has spoiled you by reading papers that don't deserve to be read, listening to comments that don't deserve a hearing, paying attention even to the lazy, ill-informed and rude. We had to do it, for the sake of education. But nobody will ever do it again. College has deprived you of adequate preparation for the last 50 years. It has failed you by being easy, free, forgiving, attentive, comfortable, interesting, unchallenging fun. Good luck tomorrow."

[7] That is why, on this commencement day, we have nothing in which to take much pride.

[8] Oh, yes, there is one more thing. Try not to act toward your co-workers and bosses as you have acted toward us. I mean, when they give you what you want but have not earned, don't abuse them, insult them, act out with them yourparlous relationships with your parents. This too we have tolerated. It was, as I said, not to be liked. Few professors actually care whether or not they are liked by peer-paralyzed adolescents, fools so shallow as to imagine professors care not about education but about popularity. It was, again, to be rid of you.So go, unlearn the lies we taught you. To life! (585 words)