

The inability to say thank you



by Sam Blanc

English is one of the most difficult languages to learn, not only because many of the sounds are harsh and contradictory, but also because half the letters disappear when the words leave your mouth.

However, for me, the hardest word to say was never otorhinolaryngologist or anemone or supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, but thank you.

It was probably some horrible memory that I've repressed from my childhood, but for whatever reason, my three biggest fears have always been drowning, those millipede things that crawl out of the drain, and most of all, narcissism.

Accepting a compliment always felt conceited and something about thinking you're better than you are, or at least having people think you think you're better than you are, absolutely terrifies me.

I'm not exactly sure why this is. It could be because of social pressures to act courteous and meek. It could be because self deprecation is like 75% of all the humor I have. It could be because I'm afraid of failure.

Whatever it is, getting compliments always makes me wildly uncomfortable.

It's odd, because I never felt like I was significantly lacking in confidence. At least, not to a greater extent than any other teenager that's ever existed.

As far as I know, it's not an

inability to comprehend my actions as it is an inability to accept them from other people. But I don't really think about it much anymore, but I feel like it's more of a lifestyle choice than a real issue.

I have, for as long as I can remember, played the contrarian. This rings true for the television I watch, for the music I listen to, and most of all for anything positive that is ever said about me. I'm a "no-I'm-not" robot.

"That drawing's really cool."

"No it's not."

"Your essay's really good."

"No it's not."

"Your shoes are a nice shade of blue."

"No they're not."

I've never had a problem setting reasonable goals for myself, so it seems like I can reasonably assess my skill level at certain things, but when it comes to proclaiming it out loud, it becomes an issue.

I'm certainly better than I used to be, at least I hope so, but saying thank you still sometimes feels like pulling a tennis ball out of my throat.

I just feel like saying you're good at something is such a bold statement, even if it's the tiniest thing. What does that even mean? People told me I was good at drawing when I was little.

I was not good at drawing. My peoples' heads looked like uneven watermelons; their hands were sticks and they had at least 8 fingers per hand that went all the way around the wrists.

But the complements weren't ingenuine. People genuinely thought my watermelon-headed, stick-armed, ceiling-fan-handed doodles were good--for a 4 year old.

So there are different standards for 4 year olds. Makes sense, they're

little, but there are standards for 17 year olds too, and 25 year olds, and 40 year olds and 80 year olds.

So are we ever objectively good, or do all of our talents hang in a chasm of subjectivity until the end of time?

I suppose talent is a sort of Democratic process. If enough people agree on it, it must be true. How else would the three grey canvases I saw at the Art Institute last year get there?

They certainly weren't selected for their technical precision and attention to detail. But then again, everyone thought Aristotle was crazy when he said the Earth wasn't flat, but he turned out to have a pretty good point.

But whether or not there is an objective talent, whether or not I've ever been truly talented at anything in my life, I feel the consistent need to thrust my humility onto others, even if they're just trying to say something nice.

Do all of our talents hang in a chasm of subjectivity until the end of time?

It's so stupid because I don't think anyone has ever given a compliment only to denounce the person they gave it to as a narcissist. In fact, giving a compliment usually feels good.

That's where the downside of this is: when I think about it, immediately snapping "no I'm not" to any complement is basically calling someone stupid for just being kind. And no one deserves to feel stupid.

North Shore privilege keeps us young



by Max Minogue

Right now, as you, my loyal reader, read my words, I am officially an 18-year-old man. To everybody who wished me a happy birthday yesterday, thank you. To everybody who did not, you mean nothing to me.

Eighteen is the big year. It's the year that is nationally referred to as adulthood, albeit young adulthood.

I can now officially be tried as an adult for any future crimes I commit. I can buy a pack of cigarettes, along with a Juul and spray paint to make myself the coolest kid there is.

I get to vote. I get to watch porn. I can be drafted into the military. I can get myself some tattoos and gauges and piercings. The list of new responsibilities and freedoms goes on.

The only things I really can't do at this point, because of my age, are ingesting or possessing alcohol and renting a car.

This was a moment that I've been looking forward to for a long, long time. When I was a kid, I always idealized adulthood. It was this ultimate point of freedom to me.

I was even excited to do things like budget my own money and be in charge of my own meals, because no matter how mundane, it would be for

myself. And being eighteen years old meant finally being able to do these things, at least in my eyes.

Considering how long I've waited to reach this point, it's a really odd feeling to finally be here. I expected this transition to be special, significant, or at the very least noteworthy in some way.

But so far, I'm not quite feeling it. I don't feel any more adult, nor do I feel like I'm being treated any more adult.

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My parents still treat me as their child, still the baby of the family. My teachers still act the same. My boss treats me as the same high school employee. My friends still act the same, and age gaps between us mean practically nothing.

Looking forward, it still doesn't look like anything is really going to change. Of course, I'm not speaking from my own experience but from other people's. But in college there is still an immense safety net that treats kids as not-quite-adults.

The fact that as adult high schoolers we haven't reached college yet only maintains the idea that everybody is still a child.

The most surprising thing about all of this, however, is the fact that, now legally adult, I think I'm okay with being treated like a child for a little bit longer.

I'm at that point in senior year where now, every week or

so, I'll have a sudden moment of sentimentalism as I remember how quickly high school is coming to an end. The days of a nightly dinner cooked by mom or dad are coming to an end. Those beautiful Sundays where I get to sleep in, with my dog laying by my side, aren't going to last forever.

That's a scary feeling. Change is afoot and it's coming way too quickly, even though my whole life I've been acting like I am 100% prepared for adulthood.

In our community especially, the journey to adulthood is especially dragged out.

College, or at the very least post-high school plans, are practically a given, while in many parts of the country, and especially the world, it's a privilege. Being treated as an adult is something fought for by kids through curfew or an allowance, while in other places it means parenting siblings or having a job to contribute to the family.

Most importantly, we're afforded the privilege of, even at eighteen, maintaining goals for the future that others could not even dream of due to lack of opportunity.

I guess the most adult change that I've truly felt is the fact that I'm appreciating how good I've had it. I still get to dream and fantasize about future college plans, jobs, and travels. I still get home cooked meals from parents. I still have people trying to control my life, sure, but it's done out of worry or concern.

I just hope that finally reaching this appreciation isn't a sign that my childhood is soon going to be gone for good.

Staff Editorial

More seminars, please

On March 8, New Trier and the world celebrated International Women's day: a day to celebrate the fight for women's rights and gender equality.

Internationally, the day was marked with demonstrations, speeches and protests including the "A Day without Women" strike that asked women to take the day off work to force employers and the public to realize the might of the female workforce, despite evidence that women still are being paid less than their male counterparts.

New Trier took part in the day by hosting seminars each period such as a discussion on gender inequity in sports by Strength and Conditioning Coordinator James Davis, and a presentation by Superintendent Dr. Linda Yonke. The all day event was sponsored by Girl Up Club, which is part of a United Nations campaign to empower girls all over the world.

The seminars were a success, with hundreds of students stopping in with a class or during a free period. All the KW classes attended the event as well and, for at least one period, most NT students were educated about a topic that, hopefully, had a lasting effect.

And maybe those forty minutes happened to introduce them to a different perspective, a perplexing issue, or a saddening fact that stuck with them; made them think about something beyond some group gossip or their impending chemistry test.

We, students, have been lucky these past couple of weeks. Not only were we enlightened by Wednesday's Women's day presentations, but on Feb. 28 New Trier students took part in the not so controversial All School Seminar Day on Civil Rights.

At both events students listened to powerful messages we don't often get to hear in our day to day academic lives. What students did with the messages they heard were up to each student, but at least they listened and processed them.

And that is what is important: listening and respecting others' opinions. A high school, specifically a prestigious high school that doesn't have to deal with gang fights and dropouts, should work to infuse seminars and discussions that stem beyond the common core and ACT prep into our daily curriculum.

For example, recently some of the senior psych classes took an in-school excursion to attend a discussion on gender by a speaker from the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. The presenter discussed a variety of topics such as information on transgender individuals, gender identity, and gender. The overlying message: only you can determine your gender identity.

Now gender, like women rights and civil rights, are discussions and issues we can all learn from. We are all individuals trying to coexist in this beautiful, heterogenous world.

Those able to attend the gender presentation, women's seminar, or All School Seminar where given a tool that reaches beyond the ability to write a synthesis essay in your English class.

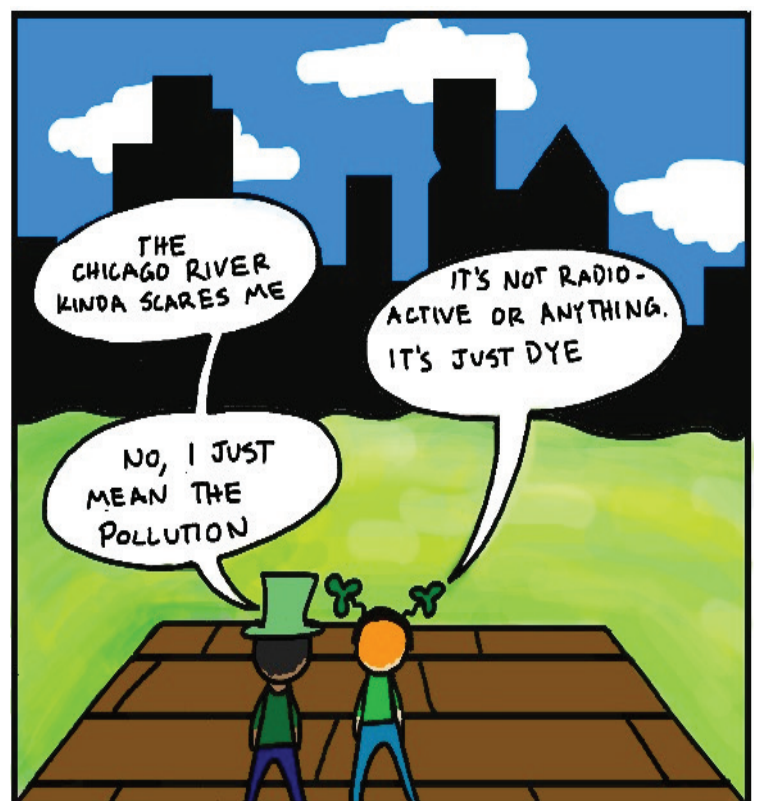
By attending these seminars and listening with open ears and a clear mind, we can all gain insight that will help us beyond our academic careers. The unique perspectives we learn in these seminar days will allow us to coexist in this ever increasing diverse and welcoming world.

So student leaders, administrators, and staff we have a simple request: more seminars. Continue to infuse seminars into to yearly curriculum (like many teachers have already done), embrace different perspectives, and help New Trier students grow beyond the impressive athletes and academics and into educated and open citizens of the modern world.

If our fellow peers still are not convinced that the personal growth obtained by these seminars is not worth the time, think of it as a competition with our rivals.

Good grades and spectacular athletic abilities will only get us so far in the contemporary world. Diverse perspectives and an ability to coexist with those from whom we differ will get us much farther than our resumes' reach.

So hear our plea; more seminars please.



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