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Plagiarpalooza

Students, professors must guard against academic dishonesty

Plagiarism has plagued students of every age since the inception of standardized testing. Usually seen as a harmless, natural way for athletic-scholarship recipients to pass classes, plagiarism actually is a potential fly in the nation's educational ointment. It has the explosive capability to undermine and degrade such American educational fundamentals as underpaid teachers and toilet-paperless restroom stalls.



JACOB HUVAL

Plagiarism is loosely defined as the act of artistic or literary theft, which leaves the individual wondering, "Shouldn't the Foo Fighters be getting their pants sued off by The Rolling Stones? And shouldn't The Rolling Stones be getting their pants sued off by The Beatles? And shouldn't The Beatles be getting their pants sued off by Fog, the primordial caveman who, with two flat stones, created the first backbeat?"

The answer is "No." Knowing full well that problems solved by lawsuits amount to those solved by NetAid, scholastic circles are taking it upon themselves to crack down on plagiarism. However, to achieve their dreams of total scholastic honesty, both professors and students must work together to know how to detect plagiarism and how to know when one's own work is in doubt.

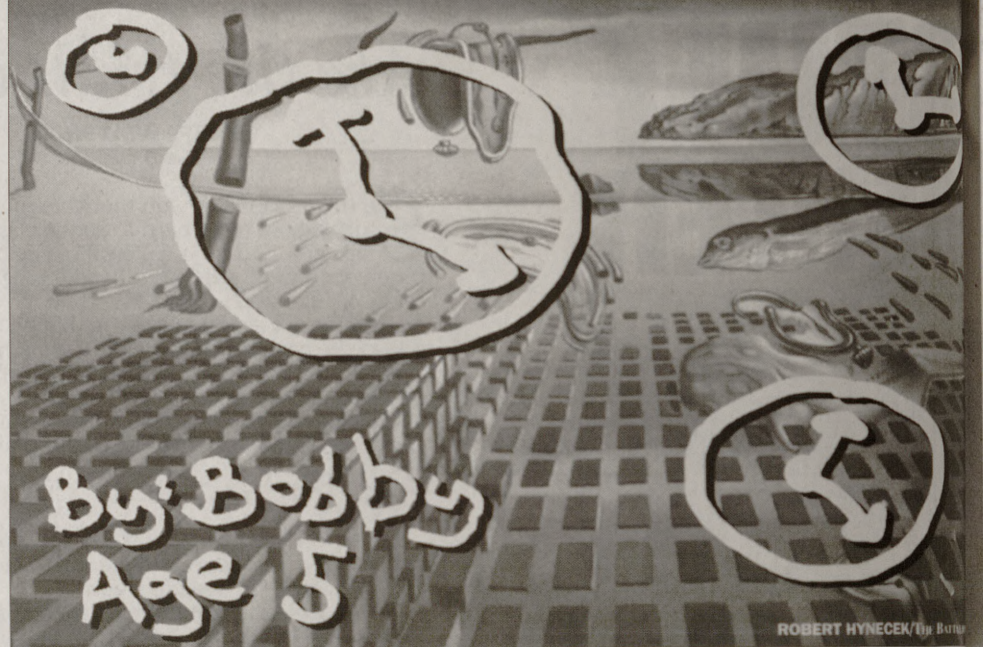
Many apprehensive professors have collaborated their notes and talents to publish a collection of guidelines to identify the telltale signs of both blatant and subtle plagiarism in a book titled *War and Peace*. The authors suggest one can sense plagiarism if an author's name is vaguely familiar, such as Chuck Nabokov, Edgar Allen Poverty-level and Opreh. Another reliable way to detect literary theft is to examine the actual text of a document for inconsistent writing.

If an educational official reads a paper with the line "It was the best of times; it was the worst of the not-as-good-as-the-best-of times," he or she can justifiably suspect plagiarism. If the professor happens across "It was the best of times; it was happy hour," alcoholism can be added to the charge. And if the academician reads "It was the best of times. I like pudding. The End," he or she can at least respect the student's average yards per carry.

Once a professor suspects scholastic dishonesty, how should he or she confront the student? Experience shows a student publicly accused of plagiarism will immediately deny the charge, drop the course and move to Hollywood. Instead, professors are encouraged to utilize a more subtle, mild-mannered approach.

Instead of spewing flames from one's mouth into the very heart of the student as the earth splits and cries forth, and steaming lava and hellish, demonic hounds circle the classroom, professors can hope to attain true academic honesty by appealing to the student's reasoning and goodwill. Or at least replace the hellhounds with purgaterriers.

Knowing when one's academic honesty is in question is just as important as knowing when



to be suspicious. By being aware of others' suspicions, one can act quickly to dispel any doubts of integrity and thus restart the wonderful magic machine of American education. A sign a student's work has aroused a professor's suspicion is if he or she can somehow remember the student's face and name in a class of 300. Another sign of suspicion is if during lectures the professor tends to stare at the suspected plagiarist. Or maybe the professor is starting to see public speaking's trick-of-the-trade payoff of picturing everyone in their underwear.

Of course, if one believes a professor is suspicious of one's work yet does not have any evidence to prove credibility, he or she should either examine and reconsider the sources from which information was "borrowed" for the sake of future assignments or get good at football fast.

But since anabolic steroids have become legitimate for public consumption and therefore scarce, the former is the student's best bet. Plagiarism is inherently wrong, but plagiarizing from poor sources is doubly upsetting. One will earn scholastic expulsion; the other will warrant a staff-writing position. Whether because of their place in common knowledge, their inconsistency or their unreliability, bad sources used to gather information for misuse include: retirement homes (the Cold War was not fought in Antarctica, and gravy was not originally blue), psychic hotlines (economics cannot be understood by palm readings, and the history of colonial America has nothing to do with one's credit card number) and the Internet in general (weirdos in chatrooms who want to "help you with anatomy" are not one's friends, and a Website is not an authority on animal husbandry, no matter what the pictures show).

It is through the Internet, however, that professors have found a new weapon to use in

the fight against plagiarism. The Website "www.plagiarism.com" boasts a number of features with which a professor can compare student's works over time, search for imitation about plagiarism, utilize a vast database of scholastic references and maybe even identify that special someone on one of the site's "hot" message boards (SM. Doctorate. Like think. Has a huge thesis! Can teach two subjects at the same time! Seeking SF with grant money for Poppa).

All things aside, plagiarism, even if committed without rebuke from authority, is a victimless crime. Using a prefabricated name as one's own may seem beneficial and at times even necessary for success in school, and it very well may be. In the long run, however, plagiarism is a bane for even the most desperate student. By claiming a superior per as one's own, a precedent is set. One's work will have to be of equal or greater caliber from that point on, magnifying the student's responsibility and woe.

The fact is the very things which make the world turn on its crystalline axis were essentially plagiarized from the metaphorical genes of history. From the Grimms' Seven Dwarfs came the Smurfs. From the Smurfs came Fraggie Rock. From Fraggie Rock came Teletubbies. From Teletubbies came Jerry Falwell. The cycle continues.

Behold the grand paradox of plagiarism—the sanctioned trespass. It is the very subject our decries and the very substance of our hood. It is truly the worst of times; it is truly the worst of times.

Jacob Huval is a sophomore English major.

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