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## A Response to Submitting to the Disciplines of Liberation

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## **A Response to Submitting to the Disciplines of Liberation**

Linda Bingham

Reading Dr. Koch's paper on a Liberal Arts Education created conflict in me. Whereas I highly value such an education, I despair that the information/material age we live in continues to devalue it. Granted, I teach writing in a community college rather than a university. We have open enrollment, which includes students who are not necessarily prepared for college. However, I must point out that most of my students are general education students taking their first two years at the community college with plans to transfer to a 4-year school to complete their education. For the most part, these students are not interested in expanding their minds, knowledge, imagination, etc. so much as to get a piece of paper which will (they hope) get them a job. For this reason, I have reduced my teaching to instilling the skills that will be needed to meet the requirements of acceptable college writing in a variety of classes. I say "reduced" in the previous sentence, but in reality it has become so much harder with little real joy. Current abuses of our language through texting, "twittering", emailing, and "clever" advertising have undermined many students' elementary skills in language. When I began teaching, though I had aspirations of classroom discussions based on deep thinking and imagination, my experience is that it is impossible to get any response close to that from more than a couple students a semester. I do not mean to malign the students as I don't really blame them. Nor do I blame their previous K-12 teachers. Instead, I deplore the effect of pop culture and our materialistic society on them.

I envy Dr. Koch for evidently finding those students interested in a true education. And I hope those students appreciate the education they are getting in his classes as it is a true Liberal Arts Education. I also applaud Dr. Koch's confidence in these students and their futures. What he has done for me in this article is to reinstall my faith in the importance of at least attempting to pass on my own "engagement with words" to my students (3). Rather than just instructing them in "correct" college writing and critical thinking, I am motivated to return to some of my earlier aspirations. I know the importance of words. Western civilization would not exist as we know it without the continued use of words and language. They are the basis for all of the liberal arts. How can one explain his/her thoughts, ideas, and discoveries without words, written or spoken? And, as has oft been expressed, how can I know what I think about something until I have written about it (the best reason existing for having multiple drafts). I can't imagine a Liberal Arts Core without one or two required writing classes. It is through writing (even in my more formulaic classes) that students expand their horizons. It is through reading, writing, and research that they learn to think critically. And a writing class is where they can acquire a respect for words and our language. Though I have been serving the basic college writing needs, I think, thanks to Dr. Koch's article, that I will be including more of my own passion for words and the magic they can work.