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• **WELL, MAYBE WE AREN'T ALL WRITERS NOW**

As someone who is forced to read young people's writing all the time, I am one of those individuals Anne Trubek '88 dismisses as blind to the benefits of digital social media stemming from its requirement for frequent writing.

Ms. Trubek misses two critical points that in my opinion undermine her argument. The first is that writing more is not enough to make one a better writer—the first and more important part of the equation is to read more. Learning to write well is more about developing a good ear than it is about learning the rules of grammar or repeating a hundred stream-of-consciousness exercises. And young people now read far, far less than any previous generation. If one does not know what good writing—of all sorts—sounds like, how can writing the same self-interested tripe over and over lead to improvement? There has to be a target to aim for, an internalized Gestalt for the sound and rhythm of well articulated words.

The second point is that if writing is about communication—on even the most basic level—then the current standards of texting and social media come up very short again. Most of the self-interested chatter generated within social media either encodes standard inanities (lol) or is simply unclear—even indecipherable. Often one isn't sure what writers are trying to say because, frankly, they lack the skill to say it. Hence when students are asked to communicate in writing something subtle, complex, or meaningful, for the most part they fail utterly—their extensive training in social media has let them down. Their inability to communicate thoughts, feelings, opinions, and information clearly and concisely, let alone beautifully or poetically, is so compromised that at times I despair for the future. I do not believe that young people are stupider now—far from it. But they have been let down by a moribund educational system and the mistaken belief that

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all change, especially technologically based change, leads to good things. Tweeting and texting do not substitute for extensive (and catholic) reading and serious, informed writing, whether one's goal is to be the next Steinbeck or simply to write a memo that everyone in the office can understand. Finally, I note with some irony that in the same issue of the alumni magazine, President Krislov reports the recommendations of several eminent winners of the National Humanity Medal about the role of the humanities in undergraduate institutions. Almost to a person they emphasized the importance of understanding and appreciating text. I don't think texting and tweeting is what they had in mind.

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