

PARAGRAPHING: THE RHYTHMS OF ROTH

Answer Key

#1 Philip Roth (*American Pastoral*)

The Swede. During the war years, when I was still a grade school boy, this was a magical name in our Newark neighborhood, even to adults just a generation removed from the city's old Prince Street ghetto and not yet so flawlessly Americanized as to be bowled over by the prowess of a high school athlete. The name was magical; so was the anomalous face. Of the few fair-complexioned Jewish students in our preponderantly Jewish public high school, none possessed anything remotely like the steep-jawed, insentient Viking mask of this blue-eyed blond born into our tribe as Seymour Irving Levov.

The Swede starred as end in football, center in basketball, and first baseman in baseball. Only the basketball team was ever any good – twice winning the city championship while he was its leading scorer – but as long as the Swede excelled, the fate of our sports teams didn't matter much to a student body whose elders, largely undereducated and overburdened, venerated academic achievement above all else. Physical aggression, even camouflaged by athletic uniforms and official rules and intended to do no harm to Jews, was not a traditional source of pleasure in our community – advanced degrees were. Nonetheless, through the Swede, the neighborhood entered into a fantasy about itself and about the world, the fantasy of sports fans everywhere: almost like Gentiles (as they imagined Gentiles), our families could forget the way things actually work and make an athletic performance the repository of all their hopes. Primarily, they could forget the war.

The elevation of Swede Levov into the household Apollo of the Weequahic Jews can best be explained, I think, by the war against the Germans and the Japanese and the fears that it fostered. With the Swede indomitable on the playing field, the meaningless surface of life provided a bizarre, delusionary kind of sustenance, the happy release into a Swedean innocence, for those who lived in dread of never seeing their sons or their brothers or their husbands again.

#2 Philip Roth (Wikipedia Letter):

Dear Wikipedia,

I am Philip Roth. I had reason recently to read for the first time the Wikipedia entry discussing my novel "The Human Stain." The entry contains a serious misstatement that I would like to ask to have removed. This item entered Wikipedia not from the world of truthfulness but from the babble of literary gossip – there is no truth in it at all.

Yet when, through an official interlocutor, I recently petitioned Wikipedia to delete this misstatement, along with two others, my interlocutor was told by the "English Wikipedia Administrator" – in a letter dated August 25th and addressed to my interlocutor – that I, Roth, was not a credible source: "I understand your point that the author is the greatest authority on their own work," writes the Wikipedia Administrator – "but we require secondary sources."

Thus was created the occasion for this open letter. After failing to get a change made through the usual channels, I don't know how else to proceed.¹

¹ The entry now contains a subsection titled "Possible resemblance to Anatole Broyard," which states that certain reviews of the novel "suggested that the central character of Coleman Silk might have been inspired by Anatole Broyard . . ." The section concludes that Roth has stated he did not know of Broyard's ancestry until after the book was in progress.

#3 Justice Sandra Day O'Connor:

As part of its goal of “assembling a class that is both exceptionally academically qualified and broadly diverse,” the Law School seeks to “enroll a ‘critical mass’ of minority students.” Brief for Respondents Bollinger et al. 13. The Law School’s interest is not simply “to assure within its student body some specified percentage of a particular group merely because of its race or ethnic origin.” *Bakke*, 438 U.S., at 307 (opinion of Powell, J.). That would amount to outright racial balancing, which is patently unconstitutional. *Ibid.*; *Freeman v. Pitts*, 503 U.S. 467, 494 (1992) (“Racial balance is not to be achieved for its own sake”); *Richmond v. J. A. Croson Co.*, 488 U.S., at 507. Rather, the Law School’s concept of critical mass is defined by reference to the educational benefits that diversity is designed to produce.

These benefits are substantial. As the District Court emphasized, the Law School’s admissions policy promotes “cross-racial understanding,” helps to break down racial stereotypes, and “enables [students] to better understand persons of different races.” App. to Pet. for Cert. 246a. These benefits are “important and laudable,” because “classroom discussion is livelier, more spirited, and simply more enlightening and interesting” when the students have “the greatest possible variety of backgrounds.” *Id.*, at 246a, 244a.

The Law School’s claim of a compelling interest is further bolstered by its *amici*, who point to the educational benefits that flow from student body diversity. In addition to the expert studies and reports entered into evidence at trial, numerous studies show that student body diversity promotes learning outcomes, and “better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society, and better prepares them as professionals.” Brief for American Educational Research Association et al. as *Amici Curiae* 3; see, e.g., W. Bowen & D. Bok, *The Shape of the River* (1998); *Diversity Challenged: Evidence on the Impact of Affirmative Action* (G. Orfield & M. Kurlaender eds. 2001); *Compelling Interest: Examining the Evidence on Racial Dynamics in Colleges and Universities* (M. Chang, D. Witt, J. Jones, & K. Hakuta eds. 2003).

These benefits are not theoretical but real, as major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today’s increasingly global marketplace can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints. Brief for 3M et al. as *Amici Curiae* 5; Brief for General Motors Corp. as *Amicus Curiae* 3–4. What is more, high-ranking retired officers and civilian leaders of the United States military assert that, “[b]ased on [their] decades of experience,” a “highly qualified, racially diverse officer corps ... is essential to the military’s ability to fulfill its principle mission to provide national security.” Brief for Julius W. Becton, Jr. et al. as *Amici Curiae* 27. The primary sources for the Nation’s officer corps are the service academies and the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), the latter comprising students already

admitted to participating colleges and universities. *Id.*, at 5. At present, “the military cannot achieve an officer corps that is *both* highly qualified *and* racially diverse unless the service academies and the ROTC used limited race-conscious recruiting and admissions policies.” *Ibid.* (emphasis in original). To fulfill its mission, the military “must be selective in admissions for training and education for the officer corps, *and* it must train and educate a highly qualified, racially diverse officer corps in a racially diverse setting.” *Id.*, at 29 (emphasis in original). We agree that “[i]t requires only a small step from this analysis to conclude that our country’s other most selective institutions must remain both diverse and selective.” *Ibid.*

#4 Justice Clarence Thomas

Frederick Douglass, speaking to a group of abolitionists almost 140 years ago, delivered a message lost on today's majority:

"[I]n regard to the colored people, there is always more that is benevolent, I perceive, than just, manifested towards us. What I ask for the negro is not benevolence, not pity, not sympathy, but simply *justice*. The American people have always been anxious to know what they shall do with us... I have had but one answer from the beginning. Do nothing with us! Your doing with us has already played the mischief with us. Do nothing with us! If the apples will not remain on the tree of their own strength, if they are worm-eaten at the core, if they are early ripe and disposed to fall, let them fall! ... And if the negro cannot stand on his own legs, let him fall also. All I ask is, give him a chance to stand on his own legs! Let him alone! ... [Y]our interference is doing him positive injury." What the Black Man Wants: An Address Delivered in Boston, Massachusetts, on 26 January 1865, reprinted in 4 The Frederick Douglass Papers 59, 68 (J. Blassingame & J. McKivigan eds. 1991) (emphasis in original).

Like Douglass, I believe blacks can achieve in every avenue of American life without the meddling of university administrators. Because I wish to see all students succeed whatever their color, I share, in some respect, the sympathies of those who sponsor the type of discrimination advanced by the University of Michigan Law School (Law School). The Constitution does not, however, tolerate institutional devotion to the status quo in admissions policies when such devotion ripens into racial discrimination. Nor does the Constitution countenance the unprecedented deference the Court gives to the Law School, an approach inconsistent with the very concept of "strict scrutiny."

No one would argue that a university could set up a lower general admission standard and then impose heightened requirements only on black applicants. Similarly, a university may not maintain a high admission standard and grant exemptions to favored races.

The Law School, of its own choosing, and for its own purposes, maintains an exclusionary admissions system that it knows produces racially disproportionate results. Racial discrimination is not a permissible solution to the self-inflicted wounds of this elitist admissions policy. The majority upholds the Law School's racial discrimination not by interpreting the people's Constitution, but by responding to a faddish slogan of the cognoscenti. Nevertheless, I concur in part in the Court's opinion. First, I agree with the Court insofar as its decision, which approves of only one racial classification, confirms that further use of race in admissions remains unlawful. Second, I agree with the Court's holding that racial discrimination in higher education admissions will be illegal in 25 years. See *ante*, at 31 (stating that racial discrimination will no longer be narrowly tailored, or "necessary to further" a compelling state

interest, in 25 years). I respectfully dissent from the remainder of the Court's opinion and the judgment, however, because I believe that the Law School's current use of race violates the Equal Protection Clause and that the Constitution means the same thing today as it will in 300 months.

#5 Stephen King (*On Writing*)

[Note: King decided to go without any paragraph breaks in the selected passage. It was all just one linked thought.]

“I would argue that the paragraph, not the sentence, is the basic unit of writing – the place where coherence begins and words stand a chance of becoming more than mere words. If the moment of quickeing is to come, it comes at the level of the paragraph. It is a marvellous and flexible instrument that can be a single word long or run on for pages (one paragraph in Dob Dorbertson’s historical novel *Paradise Falls* is sixteen pages long; there are paragraphs in Ross Lockridge’s *Raintree Country* which are are nearly that). You must learn to use it well if you are to write well. What this means is lots of practice; you have to learn the beat.”