



QUESTIONS FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION

- 1 Make a list of films you have seen that have Native American characters. Choose two of those films—one older, one more recent. Which characters in both films seemed most realistic and which most stereotypical? Describe the changes you notice between these two films' representations of Native American culture, language, politics, or heritage.
- 2 At the end of her essay, Strain says that Hollywood can “mix fact and fiction” while still creating a good story. Would you agree with that statement, or do you think historical accuracy should come first and entertainment values second? Choose a film about Native Americans—or any ethnic group—and explain what that film loses or gains by placing entertainment values over historical and cultural accuracy (or, conversely, by giving historical/cultural accuracy much more importance than entertainment values).
- 3 Strain conducts both a short survey and an interview which she reports on at the end of her paper. Assume you are in a peer-response group, giving her feedback on her essay. Would you advise her to integrate the information in paragraphs 17 and 18 earlier in her essay rather than tacking them on at the end? Where might that information fit? (How do you plan to integrate any interview or survey information in your own essay?)
- 4 Read the essay by Margaret Lazarus in Chapter 9, titled “All's Not Well in Land of ‘The Lion King.’” Rent *Pocahontas* from a video store and watch it. Are there racist or sexist scenes or images in Disney's version of *Pocahontas*? Does the film ultimately promote Native American cultural values or mainstream white American values? Explain.

STUDENT WRITING

BRIDGID STONE

My Friend Michelle, an Alcoholic

Bridgid Stone, a student at Southeast Missouri State University, decided to write her investigative essay on alcoholism. In the library, she was able to find quite a lot of information and statistics about alcohol. In her friend, Michelle, she had a living example of the consequences of alcohol abuse. The question, however, was how to combine the two. As you read her essay, notice how she interweaves description and dialogue with facts and statistics.

Five million teenagers are problem drinkers, according to *Group magazine's* article “Sex, Drugs, and Alcohol.” One of these five million teenagers is my friend, Michelle.

“I can’t wait to go out tonight and get drunk,” Michelle announces 2
as she walks into my dorm room. I just sigh and shake my head. Michelle
has been drunk every night since Wednesday. In the last three days, she
has been to more fraternity parties than classes.

We leave a few hours later for a Sig Tau party. Even though I have 3
been attending these parties for weeks now, the amount of alcohol present
still amazes me. Almost everyone is walking around with a twelve-
pack of beer. Others are carrying fifths of vodka or Jack Daniels whiskey.
As cited in *Fraternities and Sororities on Contemporary College Campuses*,
73 percent of fraternity advisers believe that alcohol is a problem in fra-
ternities. I wish the other 27 percent could be here now. Fraternities are
synonymous with drinking.

Michelle and I both have innocent-looking squeeze bottles, but inside 4
are very stiff screwdrivers. They probably have more vodka than orange
juice. Michelle finishes her drink before I am halfway through mine. So
she finishes off mine, too, before disappearing into the throng of people
at the party. The next time I see her, she is holding a beer in each hand.
Her speech is slurred, and she can barely stand up on her own.

We head back to the dorm when Michelle starts vomiting. Once we 5
are in her room, I help her undress and put her to bed.

“Bridgid, I am so sorry,” Michelle cries, “I promise never to drink 6
again.”

“Okay, just get some sleep,” I tell her as I leave. 7

It’s Thursday night and Michelle is ready to party again. 8

“I haven’t been to my Friday 8:00 class in a month. Do you think I 9
should just stay up all night after the party and go to class drunk? Or
should I just not go to class and sleep in?” Michelle asks.

“Don’t go out and get drunk. Stay home tonight and get up and go 10
to your classes tomorrow,” I advise.

“I am just going to sleep in,” Michelle informs me as she leaves for 11
the party.

Like Michelle, an estimated 4.6 million adolescents experience nega- 12
tive consequences of alcohol abuse, such as poor school performance. This
was reported in a survey conducted by NIAAA for a United States Congres-
sional report.

Early Friday morning, I get a phone call from the on-duty resident 13
adviser. Michelle has passed out in the lobby of the Towers Complex. She
couldn’t remember her phone number or even what floor she lived on,
but I had written my phone number on Michelle’s hand, so she could call
me if she got into any trouble. The R.A. had seen my number and decided
to call, since Michelle was too drunk to dial the four digits.

“Could you please escort your friend up to your room?” the R.A. 14
asks. She doesn’t sound very happy.

“Sure, I will be down in a few minutes,” I promise. It takes me and 15
another girl from our floor to get Michelle onto the elevator. She keeps
lying down or passing out. Thirty minutes later, we get Michelle into bed.

...continued My Friend Michelle, an Alcoholic, **Bridgid Stone**

She is mumbling incoherently, and she reeks of alcohol. Needless to say, Michelle doesn't make it to her 8:00 A.M. class, again.

Saturday afternoon, I confront Michelle about the Thursday night incident. This is rather hard to do, since she doesn't remember any of it.

"I just drink to loosen up. I'm much more fun if I've been drinking," Michelle tells me.

"You are not much fun when you are puking or passing out," I reply. A desire to loosen up is one of the main reasons that teenagers drink, reports *Group* magazine. Other reasons include a need to escape and to rebel.

"I have to release steam every once in a while," she argues. "School is really stressing me out."

"Michelle, you don't even go to class," I tell her.

"Everyone else drinks!" she says. "Why are you picking on me?" She stomps out of my room.

Michelle was partially correct, though, when she stated, "Everyone else drinks." As reported in *Alcohol and Youth*, more than 80 percent of all college students surveyed had been drinking in the previous month. But this doesn't mean that what Michelle is doing is any less serious. In all probability, Michelle is an alcoholic.

A test that is often used to determine if someone has a drinking problem can be found in *Getting Them Sober*, by Toby Rice Andrews. There are twenty questions on the test. A "yes" answer to two of the questions indicates a possible drinking problem. Questions include: "Do you miss time from school or work due to drinking?" "Do you drink to escape from worries or troubles?" "Do you drink because you are shy?" "Have you ever had a memory loss due to drinking?" Michelle would probably have answered "yes" to all of the above questions.

I moved out of the dorm at the beginning of the second semester, so I haven't seen much of Michelle. The last time I saw her was about three weeks ago. She had gotten arrested while in New Orleans for spring break. Apparently, Michelle had been out drinking and eventually had been arrested for public drunkenness.

"It wasn't that bad," she told me. "I don't even remember being in the jail cell. I was pretty trashed."

Works Cited

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QUESTIONS FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION

- 1 Investigative reports should provide information without editorializing or arguing for or against one perspective or another. Even though Stone is writing about her friend, Michelle, does she sympathize with Michelle or make excuses for her? Does she censure Michelle for her behavior? How effectively does Stone maintain a reporter's distance as she describes Michelle's behavior and presents statistics and other background information? Explain, referring to specific passages in the essay.
- 2 Who is Stone's audience for her essay? Where would you recommend that Stone send her essay for possible publication? List two possible publication sources (magazines or newspapers), and explain your choices.
- 3 If Stone were revising her essay, what advice would you give her about balancing statistics and personal experience? Should she have more statistics? Should she have more narrative? Refer to specific paragraphs and examples in your response.
- 4 Stone's use of the present tense adds dramatic impact to her essay. Reread her essay, noticing where she uses the present tense and where she shifts to the past tense. Where was the use of the present tense most effective? Did her tense shifting confuse you at any point? Where?
- 5 Compare Stone's essay with Kozol's essay earlier in this chapter. What reporting strategies does Stone adapt from Kozol? How are their reporting strategies different? Explain your response by referring to specific passages from each author.



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