

**Student Work from DeBakey High School  
November 16, 2015**

From **Miriam Cordova:**

“Prompt #1: Virus’s perspective

I see her and I know she really wants to follow me. I keep walking toward this forest with infinite paths to take, which also makes me wonder where I should take her. I keep the girl in check as I turn to assure myself that she is following me. That’s it, come with me, you can do it. All I want is a small contact with you. It won’t hurt I promise. I turn once again, and see that she stops. Why is she stopping? No! We are almost there. Suddenly, out of nowhere these humans start attacking my host, my minion. No. They’ve got me. They will ruin everything. It’s over.”

From **Richard Kao:**

“Prompt #2: The Walking Dead

The theme of zombie outbreaks are quite popular and recurrent in today’s media. The AMC TV show, The Walking Dead provides an example of the survival of the fittest and the psychological effects of a pandemic. The characters in the Walking Dead initially begin by staying together in order to survive and thrive in the zombie outbreak. However, as the outbreak continues, the characters soon discover that the outbreak not only causes the ruin of the body, but the ruin of the mind. The outbreak corrupts the surviving humans by instilling the extreme concept of “kill or be killed.” With this brutal concept, the characters of this show are shown to be worse than the undead. While the undead kills for instinct, the humans kill for cruelty.”

From **Kevin Castillo:**

“Rice Essay Prompt #2:

Frank McCourt’s memoir “Angela’s Ashes” depicts his childhood life where he and his family constantly struggled to meet basic necessities. It was during this time that Frank witnessed what people in Ireland referred to as “The Consumption”, which is what we know as tuberculosis. All around, Frank witnessed neighbors, school friends, and family members die from this illness. The prevalence of the illness created a sense of paranoia amongst the citizens of Limerick because no one truly knew the cause of the illness; they believed it was one’s immoral behaviors that brought about “The Consumption”. Through their many financial and medical hardships, Frank and his family (with the exception of his father) managed to stay together nonetheless. This disease united Frank and his family because Frank’s mother looked after them even more, since the consumption was quite common amongst the poor. Being the oldest child, Frank would look after his younger siblings, especially Malachy, who never knew how to stay put. Throughout the novel, Frank is diagnosed with several illnesses, like an extreme case of conjunctivitis and typhoid fever, but the one thing that all the McCourts shared is an inextinguishable hunger. All these conditions reiterate a common principle of modern medicine: in order for one to be strong and healthy, he must have all basic necessities. This was not the case for Frank and his family since they were always famished and they lived in a poorly kept room that constantly flooded (keep in mind that Ireland’s year-round weather is chilly, and its

winters are relentlessly harsh). Due to the many great advancements of modern medicine, we know that the conditions in which Frank and his family lived created a reservoir for pathogens and a weakening disposition, thus resulting in the many health issues the McCourts faced. Frank McCourt's novel is a great source that depicts how illnesses affect how people and how they think about disease in general and how such catastrophic events may bring clashing sides together to protect one another from an invisible foe.”

From **Katrina George:**

“I watched as the village burned to ashes. Never before had I seen so much fire. Out of the sky, round eggs had fallen, as they hit the ground, they burst into a million flames. As soon as the first one landed, I jumped tree to tree, as far away as I could get. After the last ember had died down, I left. There was nothing left there.

I spent days wandering through the forest, looking for a new home. Exhausted and hungry, I reached a small river and drank from it. Suddenly, everything went black. I screamed and yelled as I lifted off the ground. The bag surrounding me was thick and I couldn't claw my way out of it. I left myself sway as my kidnapper left the river. I continued screaming and kicking for what seemed like years, but to no avail. There was no point. I slept.

When I woke, I was in a cage in the back of a car. I jumped up and started screaming. A man reached back to quiet me, and I scratched at him. He yelled at me. I felt proud. Finally, the car slowed and came to a stop. The man pulled me out and took me into a store of some sort. In the little time I had, I looked at my surroundings. I was clearly far from home. The two men talked and came to some sort of deal. The man that had brought me left. For some strange reason, I watched him walk out, I felt regret. Maybe if I had been more kind he would have taken me home. The new man threw me some scraps into my cage. I sniffed them with distaste. This wasn't what I was used to. But I was starving. I scarfed it down and looked around me. There were other animals, in cages similar to mine. It didn't look like there were any more monkeys though. The man came back with an ugly expression on his face. He snarled at me. He put his hands into my cage. Too close. I bit him. He screamed. He ran to the back of the room. I could hear him yelling.

A while later, the first man that had brought me came back. I perked up. Maybe he was here to take me home. He talked to the other man for a few minutes, then he took me back to the car. We drove for a while and he stopped by the side of the road eventually. He took me out. He opened the door to my cage. I was free.”

From **Adrian Moga:**

“Prompt #2: Disease Narratives in Media:

A popular outbreak scenario in movies, TV shows, and video games is the zombie outbreak. For example, in the movie *World War Z* and in the TV show *The Walking Dead*, the zombie disease is spread in the form of a virus, while in the video game *The Last of Us*, the zombie disease is portrayed as a fungal infection. Despite these differences in the pathology of the zombie infection, all of these narratives share common elements; specifically, they all feature themes such as the value of human relationships, the importance of every human life, and the valiance of the researchers fighting for a cure. These themes all combine to create a message which reverberates through all the narratives: while the zombie outbreak may tear humanity apart,

humans can overcome this challenge by always staying together. This is a valuable lesson which not only reflects past human reactions to deadly epidemics, but also inspires people to continue to collaborate in order to face any and all challenges.”

From **Aadil Noon**:

“Prompt-1

The pet store scene of *outbreak* (1995) through the eyes of the monkey

The scene opens in complete darkness which slowly turns into an intense light. This light then dims to reveal a close up of a pet store owner’s face through the bars of a cage. Then we hear the sounds of a monkey whimpering while the man’s voice sounds like incoherent booming noise pollution. The man then opens the cage and pulls us (the monkey) out of the cage. The scene suddenly becomes completely quiet except for a heartbeat and time slows. The beat then goes faster and faster until the monkey screeches and scratches the pet store owner and the noise of the surrounding world returns. The monkey then runs out of the store into a great white light which then transitions to the next scene.”

From **Karen Gutierrez**:

“The movie *Outbreak* is about a new virus coming over to the United States through a monkey and it killing a lot of people. It was a huge problem because the CDC did not know where it was coming from. The village where the virus was found was burned to the ground but little did they know, the virus was in the monkey the whole time. While the village was burning the monkey was in a tree far away and eventually got caught by a person who sells exotic animals. It then got transported to the United States and from there it infected many people. To the people this is terrible because they don’t know what is going on or why people are dying in just hours. To the virus everything was great because it got to invade other organisms and take over and multiply becoming stronger and better.”

From **Joel Gil**:

“Monkey’s Point of View:

This dilemma about me being the center of attention or I guess the cause and only hope for humanity started back in my hometown Zaire. In this village, I saw many of the residents living there all of a sudden get sick, really sick. From there, I was just happily roaming the jungle when all of a sudden I saw this guy approach me. At the time he seemed like a nice person. He had food in his hand, so I assumed he had good intentions, guess what, I was wrong. Next thing I saw was that I got kidnapped in this really uncomfortable cage. I was really made so before I got kidnapped, I scratched this guy as a reminder. From there I was supposed to get sold at a local pet store but I caused so much trouble that they kicked me out of the pet store. I later escaped to the wild where I was roaming freely once again. A day or two passed when I found a very nice child who would feed me, talk to me, and give me love that I deserved. The next day, I saw this helicopter land close to the house and saw these men go inside the house. Next thing, the nice child was calling me. I was hesitant this time since I was scared these people would try to kidnap me, so I was about to attack the child just in case when I felt a sharp pain and I lost consciousness. I woke up in this type of small place but it wasn’t the same cage as the last time. These people

started injecting stuff in me which would knock me out, make me feel sick, or lose my appetite. Finally it was all over and they let me free. I think I did something good, probably saved humanity of the same thing that kept killing my people back in Zaire, I feel really confused but rather accomplished about what happened.”

From **Elizabeth Vu:**

“In *Outbreak*, a 1995 American medical disaster film, Wolfgang Peterson personifies Motaba, an artificial virus very similar to Ebola, as a very deadly and serious being capable of causing a very lethal epidemic. For example, there was a scene in which military officials were detecting that the Motaba virus could rapidly kill an entire population very quickly. Within the biologically infected sample of the village man they were looking at, the officials consider the virus within this man as having its own identity. Thus, not only should they remove this deadly virus from this man, but they should also exterminate the whole African village in which the man was from. While all of this occurring, little do the officials realize that the true cause of the virus is the white-headed capuchin monkey who carries it. This exemplifies that potentially fatal diseases really do tear individuals apart and impede viewing a situation comprehensively. With that said, the media and government can really overdramatize a disease in which they find destructive. As a result, many citizens fall within this fallacy of a perceived deathly disease and act with horror when actually the disease is not as harmful as it seems.”

From **Celeste Hernandez:**

“Marie Lu’s novel *The Young Elites* is an example of a story that represents disease and medicine. In her novel, Marie describes a world in which the population has been ravaged by a deadly disease that kills the old and severely affects the young: the blood fever. Once infected, patients would experience strange, mottled patterns on their skin, and their hair and lashes would change from one color to another, and they would produce blood-tinged tears. Those who survived were marked forever; they called them “malfettos” or abominations. Adelina Amouteru, the story’s main character, is one such survivor. Her long, black hair turned silver, her lashes went pale, and where her left eye once was, a jagged scar remains. Like all those that survived, Adelina is despised and feared, and like all those who survived, Adelina has developed mysterious and powerful gifts capable of pain and destruction. For this reason, all “malfettos” are persecuted. Encouraged by the crown as a means to provide protection and reassurance, civilians hunt for the “malfettos” and turn them in to the royal guards, who then do a public show of killing them. The survivors live hidden in the shadows with fear of being captured, but some want revenge against those who hurt them. This disease has torn the country apart. No one is safe, no one is trustworthy, and when the malfettos claim vengeance, no one will survive. In addition, this story affects practices and perceptions of medicine by providing an example of overly dramatizing a disease. Even today, the population is quick to fear arising diseases or diseases that seem to have no cure. This story further expands this fear and shows the reader the extent of what it can lead humans to do or think and also supplies a worst-case scenario in which death and violence become “the solution” to getting rid of a disease.”

From **Carla-Cristina Orellana:**

“The point of view of a virus.

I live as virus on my own. My capsid full of DNA telling me what to do. All I want is a place, a place to belong. That's what I do as a virus. I wait until I have my chance and finally into my favorite, the human.

I rest on one of their cells and trick it into accepting my DNA. The cell, the human cells has the virus in them now. As the new cell replicates, my virus code become part of the cell. I'm finally multiplying and taking over the body. I finally have a place to belong, a place to stay. I'm so powerful that there's no cure until the scientists find one. But until then... Home sweet home.”

From **Carisia Banda:**

“In a forest in Zaire with lush green trees, a monkey named Betsy lived. She is minding her own business when a virus called Motaba entered her body. The virus does not make Betsy sick, but it takes up residence within her body. Betsy continues doing her normal business.

One day a man walks into the forest near where Betsy is searching for food. The man spots a beautiful white and brown monkey and tries to grab it. Betsy get scared and in self-defense bites the man, then climbs up a tree to get away. Betsy sees the man walk away and head to where she knows the villages are located.

The virus has been transferred to the man without the man even knowing.

A few days later Betsy goes into a tree overlooking the village were the man returned. She looks for humans but all she can see is white smoke and red flames. Not a human is in sight. She wants to go closer, but she does not want to get burned. Betsy turns around and goes back into the forest and begins hunting for food.

Weeks later, Betsy is jumping away from multiple men without success. A man grabs her by the tail and she is captured. She is thrown into a cage. Betsy hears a truck start and she begins to move. She looks out and the forest is moving away from her. She can't escape.

When she looks up again, she notices that she is slowing down and that she can now see gray were there used to be green. She stops suddenly and is removed from the truck. The cage with Betsy get taken into a white object. The door is closed and Betsy is let in complete darkness.

The plane, heading to the United States, takes off with Betsy and the virus. Betsy is leaving Africa, while the virus is multiplying in her. Betsy does not want to hurt anyone, she just wants to go back home, but that is no longer an option. Betsy just goes to sleep.”

From **Bria Wallace:**

“My previous encounter with a virus similar to the one on the Outbreak narrative, is the SARS virus in the Contagion movie. Similar to Outbreak, Contagion was a 2011 film in which a couple came back from vacationing in Hong Kong and within their two days back the wife was emitted into the hospital and later passed away from an unknown cause. However, more cases began to become reported as the virus began to spread recklessly, so the CDC and WHO begin trying to break and mobilize the code of this unique biological pathogen as it continues to mutate. As the death toll increases rapidly and people struggle to protect themselves and their loved ones from this deadly virus. In a quest, an activist blogger claims the public eye isn't

getting the whole truth about what's occurring, and sets off an epidemic of paranoia and fear as infectious as the virus itself.

This movie represents how pivotal disease is within the medical field. For Example, SARS first emerged in a remote location in China, and was then carried to Hong Kong by infected persons and begins to spread globally from Hong Kong via air travelers via airborne droplets produced by coughing or sneezing. People with SARS suffer from high fever, body aches, headache, mild respiratory symptoms, and, eventually, dry cough. The mortality rate for SARS in the movie is about 25 percent; in addition, SARS is estimated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to have sickened 8,098 people, killing 774 of them, by the end of 2003 and SARS generated huge problems for health delivery and public health systems around the world; Furthermore, the SARS virus disrupted air travel and international trade amongst citizens which threaten world health similar to that of the virus in the Outbreak narrative.”

From **Ariana Flores:**

“My name is Betsy, and I come from the land of Zaire. My family and I came here seeking a new home, but shortly after arriving, the natives began becoming ill and, eventually, dying. No treatments seem to be helping, not even the witch doctor is able to help. We came here searching for a home since our last home was plagued with a similar case. We did not anticipate that this horrific plague would follow us on our journey. Humans different to those native to the land have arrived, wearing such clothing so no skin was shown, appeared and began to examine the chaos. They soon gathered what they needed, but set the village on fire, leaving nothing behind. Hopefully, with the fire, whatever plague seemed to follow us was removed from the surface of this earth. Hopefully, this plague has been eradicated and no more harm will come to those around us.”