

UNIVERSITY WRITING PROGRAM

REAL WORLD MOTIVE EXERCISE

Instructions: First, identify the strand of conventional wisdom that the passage pushes back on. Second, identify and underline the motive statement or question. And finally, match the passage to one or more motivating moves (see “Motivating Moves” handout).

1. To millions of Americans, Bob Harper was the picture of health, a celebrity fitness trainer who whipped people into shape each week on the hit TV show “The Biggest Loser.” But last February, Mr. Harper, 52, suffered a massive heart attack at a New York City gym and went into cardiac arrest. He was saved by a bystander who administered CPR and a team of paramedics who rushed him to a hospital, where he spent two days in a coma. When he awoke, Mr. Harper was baffled, as were his doctors. His annual medical checkups had indicated he was in excellent health. How could this have happened to someone seemingly so healthy? The culprit, it turned out, was a fatty particle in the blood called lipoprotein(a).

Anahad O'Connor, “A Heart Risk Factor Even Doctors Know Little About,” *The New York Times*, January 9, 2018

Conventional wisdom:

Primary motivating move:

Secondary motivating move:

2. The bad news had been building for months at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Even as crowds poured into shows on Hellenistic kingdoms and high-tech fashion, the Met’s deficit was approaching \$40 million and had forced the buyout or layoff of some 90 employees. An expansion into a satellite building cost millions of dollars more than expected. A new Met logo and marketing plan were rolled out at great expense — and greeted with ridicule. Then, last month, a new \$600 million wing was postponed by several years, frustrating the Met’s efforts to become a serious player in the competitive field of Modern and contemporary art... After enjoying boom years, one of the most pre-eminent cultural institutions in the world is now struggling with missteps and the perils of overreaching at a time of uncertain resources. While many museums face financial and competitive pressures, the Met’s troubles are magnified, given its stature on the world stage. How can a behemoth like the Met, the thinking goes, possibly stumble? Some curators and trustees have zeroed in on Thomas P. Campbell, the Met’s director and chief executive since 2008, as well as the board that has backed him.

Robin Pogrebin, “Is the Met Museum a ‘Great Institution’ in Decline?,” *The New York Times*, February 4, 2017

Conventional wisdom:**Primary motivating move:****Secondary motivating move:**

3. When Theresa Duncan, 40, took her own life on July 10 (2007), followed a week later by her boyfriend, Jeremy Blake, 34, their friends were stunned and the press was fascinated: what had destroyed this glamorous couple, stars of New York's multi-media art world, still madly in love after 12 years?[...]The Internet filled up with conjecture about government plots and murder. Something about the story seemed to capture the modern imagination, if only because no one knew exactly why two such accomplished and attractive people had chosen to make their exit.

Nancy Jo Sales, "The Golden Suicides," *Vanity Fair*, Volume 569, January 2008

Conventional wisdom:**Primary motivating move:****Secondary motivating move:**

4. Ten months after graduation, only 60% of the law school class of 2014 had found long-term jobs that required them to pass the bar exam. Even that improvement over the class of 2013 came with three asterisks: Last year, the American Bar Association changed the job-reporting rules to give law schools an extra month for the class of 2014 to find jobs; graduates employed in law-school funded positions count in the employment rate; and the number of jobs that require bar passage fell from 2013 to 2014. Amazingly (and perversely), law schools have been able to continue to raise tuition while producing nearly twice as many graduates as the job market has been able to absorb. How is this possible? Why hasn't the market corrected itself?

Steven J. Harper, "Too Many Law Students, Too Few Legal Jobs," *The New York Times*, August 25, 2015

Conventional wisdom:**Primary motivating move:****Secondary motivating move:**

Credit: Doug Kirshen, University Writing Program

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