

Emily Harper

THE 482

Prof. Kyle A. Thomas

December 14, 2021

Senior Project Proposal

For my senior project, I have been writing a one-act play to be performed as a staged reading for a live audience. The play, titled *Closing Time*, is inspired by films such as *The Breakfast Club* and *Lemonade Mouth*. These films have received high praise for their portrayal of the challenges that come with adolescence. I would like to draw upon the issues brought up in 1985 and 2011, respectively, in addition to those brought about by our increasingly online lifestyle, financial instability, and a general sense of dread shared by those of Gen Z.

Five young retail employees are kept late into the night to refold the entire store in anticipation of a visit from corporate. The play follows a structure similar to *The Breakfast Club* as their manager, Kathy, leaves the group to do the work she assigned them, and they engage in frustrated, honest conversation instead. Kathy routinely takes her stress out on the employees and blames them for their low ranking among locations in the area. Tabby receives most of Kathy's abuse as she is often late for work and is not afraid to speak her mind. The others feel that Tabby is overly abrasive and that Kathy is awful to work with, so they typically avoid taking either side.

Devin and Erika were once friends, but Erika now avoids Devin for some unknown reason. He pushes her on this until she finally opens up and explains to him that he let her down when she came to him in a time of need. Tabby and Devin gang up on Steven for being too nice and "never saying what he really thinks." Sam, an introvert and assumed shut-in, confides in

Tabby that they have trouble interacting with others in person and have always found it easier to talk to the friends they met through video game chatrooms.

While developing the characters for this piece, I made an interesting discovery about *The Breakfast Club* and *Lemonade Mouth*. I'm not sure if this was intentional on the part of Mark Peter Hughes, the original author of the *Lemonade Mouth* novel, but his characters expand upon the labels given in *Breakfast Club*, transforming them into character archetypes. For simplicity, I referred to each *Lemonade Mouth* character as the "anti-" to each label. While Brian is the brain, Stella is the anti-brain. Claire is the princess to Mo's anti-princess. Et cetera. I formed a chart and that broke down how they each connected with one another. From there, I created characters that drew from each category to create unique people that are not merely altered copies of either property but still fit the spirit. I also took inspiration from current social tropes and slang. From the brain and the anti-brain comes the gamer. The jock and anti-jock lead to the f*ckboy. There is also the soft girl, the people pleaser, and the anarchist. These are common terms to describe teenagers and young adults within Gen Z.

There are theater companies across the country who are accepting original works, and many are looking specifically for young voices and lesser represented characters. I have some LGBT characters, and I encourage casting based on personality and acting style over appearance. I plan to submit *Closing Time* to these companies in hopes that it will be produced. From there, I would love to see this play officially published.

This project reflects my time at Missouri State in that it covers both my theatre major and screenwriting minor. I have spent much of my studies focused on staging and character development as an actor and writer. I hope to go into a career in which I can write and produce

work for myself to perform. Whenever possible I'll draw upon this piece to demonstrate my writing skills, and I'll happily use my own monologues for auditions.