

Matthew McLaughlin

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Section 4

Best Original Poem: "Unexceptional"

Despite the physical and genetic variances that exist within the human population, "Unexceptional" seeks not only to bring a broader awareness of the ordinary and average aspects of human nature, but it also attempts to put human accomplishments and achievements into a greater, more inclusive perspective. The poem itself was inspired by David McCullough Jr.'s commencement speech at the 2012 Wellesley High School graduation ceremony, in which he truly brought to life the actual insignificance of various seemingly important events, such as graduation itself or merely getting accepted into college, diluting and degrading the life contentedness of the members of the crowd. By forcing people to realize and come to terms with their inevitable inadequacy, considering the vastness of the human population, the poem urges people to push themselves to their greatest potential and to constantly desire more rather than simply to accept their unoriginal, conventional, and unimaginative ways of life. Because of the extreme competitiveness among people who are trying to make a substantial living for themselves, this encouragement and inspiration to stand out and to make oneself known could not be more relevant or even more poetic. Moreover, although it maybe quite difficult to accept and come to the realization that one may not be good enough relative to other human beings, this poem poetically induces the creation of that particular awareness and understanding, whether the reader likes it or not, conveying to the reader the fact that humans are forever imperfect and always possess the potential to increase in their capacities. Acceptance of this innate deficiency

that characterizes the entire human race is ultimately poetic because it brings people out of their comfort zones and encourages them to grow.