

Baytoven's Fifth is First

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The man who doesn't read good books has no advantage over the man who can't read them.

— Mark Twain

Listening to the fifth symphony of Ralph Vaughan Williams is like staring at a cow for forty-five minutes.

— Aaron Copland

Having implied by the preceding quotations that we have some appreciation for literature and music, we offer this short presenta-

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tion on the self-reported reading and listening practices of a sample of beginning pharmacy students. After one of the authors (MCS) had been intrigued by the results of this exercise in his school, faculty members from a sample of other pharmacy colleges and schools were recruited to participate. Students in their first professional year (third year of college) were presented (in class) with the following questions:

- Name your favorite classical music piece
- Name your favorite contemporary musical performer or group
- Name the last book you read for pleasure
- Name the *best* book you ever read (please exclude religious books)

As the data in Table 1 show, the clear leader in the favorite classical music category was Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*. Only 10 selections were mentioned by as many as 10 of the 595 responding students. This reflects the considerable diversity of the responses, another measure of which is the diversity index, which provides some indication of the range of interests in classical music.

For the cynics who may suggest that many may have listed *Symphony No. 5* because it was the only classical piece they knew, we can offer the observation that the other selections named (but not listed here because of space limitations) do include a broad range of classics. (But yes, one student *did* spell it *Baytoven*.)

Contemporary music also reflected a diversity of favorites (Table 2). Again, the total list of answers included all of the favorites that might be expected of a group of college students. In six of the nine institutions, the diversity index for contemporary music was higher than that for classical music.

Books generated very little consensus. Indeed, as Table 3 indicates, only two books were listed as best by as many as 20 students. Frankly, we were surprised to find *Gone With the Wind* at the top of the list for this age group. A recent study by Donnelly Marketing found *Gone With the Wind* to be the most often cited best book by a rational sample of the *elderly*.

Finally, the last book read for pleasure generated such a range of responses that a table was not practical. The two most frequently

TABLE 1. Favorite Classical Music Piece

Title	Number of Times Listed by Students in School/College (n)								Total (595)
	FL (49)	MA (39)	MS (96)	St.L (130)	TX (80)	USC (104)	Xavier (63)	WY (34)	
Beethoven's <u>Symphony No. 5</u>	8	3	38	36	13	10	19	11	138
<u>Moonlight Sonata</u>	1	0	3	9	3	13	2	2	33
<u>Für Elise</u>	3	1	3	11	3	5	3	0	29
<u>Nutcracker Suite</u>	2	1	3	2	7	3	0	2	20
Beethoven's <u>Symphony No. 9</u>	0	1	1	5	5	4	0	1	17
<u>William Tell Overture</u>	4	0	3	7	0	1	1	1	17
<u>1812 Overture</u>	3	2	3	5	1	0	1	0	15
Mozart, unspecified	0	0	0	1	0	0	9	0	10
<u>Rhapsody in Blue</u>	0	0	4	2	1	2	1	0	10
Pachelbel's <u>Canon</u>	1	3	0	0	2	3	0	1	10
Percentage of students listing one of Top 10	44.8	28.2	60.0	60.0	43.8	39.4	57.1	52.9	50.3
Total number of different listings	33	33	44	47	48	68	31	24	NA
Diversity index*	0.67	0.85	0.46	0.36	0.60	0.65	0.49	0.71	NA

*Diversity index = Total number of different listings/Total number of students

TABLE 2. Favorite Contemporary Musical Performer(s)

Name	<u>Number of Times Listed by Students in School/College (n)</u>								
	FL (49)	MA (39)	MS (96)	St.L (130)	TX (80)	USC (104)	Xavier (63)	WY (34)	Total (595)
Paula Abdul	4	3	4	2	5	4	0	0	22
Phil Collins	0	5	0	4	2	7	1	0	19
U2	4	1	0	3	5	2	1	1	17
Chicago	1	1	5	8	1	2	0	0	17
Billy Joel	3	3	1	2	3	2	1	0	15
Pink Floyd	4	0	1	7	1	1	0	0	14
Journey	1	0	0	3	2	2	2	1	11
The Beatles	0	1	0	4	3	2	0	1	10
Janet Jackson	0	0	0	7	0	2	1	0	10
Van Halen	0	0	1	6	0	1	2	0	10
Percentage of students listing one of Top 10	28.6	35.9	12.5	35.4	27.5	24.0	12.7	8.8	24.4
Total number of different listings	37	29	65	49	56	59	42	31	NA
Diversity index*	0.76	0.74	0.68	0.38	0.70	0.57	0.67	0.91	NA

*Diversity index = Total number of different listings/Total number of students

TABLE 3. Best Book Ever Read

Title	Number of Times Listed by Students in School/College (n)								
	FL (49)	MA (39)	MS (96)	St.L (130)	TX (80)	USC (104)	Xavier (63)	WY (34)	Total (595)
Gone With the Wind	2	2	8	11	3	7	1	3	35
To Kill a Mockingbird	1	0	7	11	4	3	2	0	28
Catcher in the Rye	1	0	2	3	1	3	1	0	11
The Count of Monte Cristo	3	1	0	0	2	3	0	1	10
Wuthering Heights	0	1	1	3	2	1	1	0	9
Percentage of students listing one of Top 10	14.3	10.3	18.8	21.5	0.15	16.3	7.9	11.8	15.6
Total number of different listings	41	36	69	81	64	80	45	30	NA
Diversity index*	0.83	0.92	0.72	0.62	0.80	0.77	0.71	0.88	NA

*Diversity index = Total number of different listings/Total number of students

mentioned books were *Pet Semetary* (15) and *Flowers in the Attic* (9). Stephen King's works together were ranked highly in both the best and most recent categories.

One of the students was kind enough to pose this question and comment on his/her response:

How are these questions going to further the education of first-year pharmacy students?

This is a stupid questionnaire and has no research value.

To these thoughtful remarks we might respond that literary and musical allusions by the professor can enrich a lecture and broaden student perspectives. Such allusions, however, can only succeed if the literature or music is known to the student. An occasional survey in one's own school may help an instructor understand a sea of blank stares when mention is made of the apothecary in *Romeo and Juliet* or the pharmacist in Willa Cather's *Shadows on the Rock*. We suggest that such a survey might also provide a clue to reading and listening that faculty could undertake.

To the student who responded, "Yeah—I'm 20—I listen to classical music all the time," we offer the consolation that his/her choice of Paula Abdul was in the mainstream but that *Weirdos from Another Planet* was not a book selected by any other student.

SUGGESTED READING

Poirer S, Martek RG. Images of pharmacy in the arts. *Am J Pharm Educ* 1985;49:10-6.

APPENDIX

The authors' responses to these questions, in no particular order, were:

Best Classical Music

Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*
1812 Overture
Madame Butterfly
The Messiah
Lt. Kije Suite
Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*
Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*
Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*

Best Contemporary Music/Performer

Paul Desmond (deceased)
David Allen Coe
Anita Baker
Kenny G
Billy Joel
Crosby, Stills & Nash
Huey Lewis & The News
Ray Charles

Last Book Read for Pleasure

Barnaby Rudge
Doc
Misery
Man's Search for Meaning
Cadillac Jack
What I Saw at the Revolution
Right from the Beginning
The Grace of Great Things

Best Book Ever Read

Jean Christophe
Megatrends
Invisible Man
Personal Knowledge
Henderson the Rain King
How to Stop Worrying and Start Living
The Jungle
Sophie's Choice