

And everyone had kept on reading and rereading books of a wild variety, new and old.

What follows is a selection of the letters I received. I will be varying these and adding responses as time proceeds, and the entire archive of responses will soon be available online:

COMMENTS FROM FORMER UR ENGLISH MAJORS:

I can't say enough about how my English degree has prepared me for life after college. At every job or internship interview I go to, the employers always say how they need someone who can write well. Outside of the fact that being well read helps you understand people and society better, the more technical skills of the English degree—close reading, editing, research, analysis, MLA citation format--has helped me get a job, and perform better at that job. I've worked for nonprofits, taught school, and now as I am transitioning to government work, I realize that the skills my employer

At UR I learned to be resourceful and to engage fully in whatever resources I'm presented, though at the time it was primarily literature, and now it is competitive analyses, contracts and marketing materials. I learned to question things, to never stop pursuing the answers I seek. I learned that there may be multiple answers to a single question or multiple paths to a single answer. I credit many of my esteemed UR English Professors for opening my mind to these possibilities. I carry this with me today, and still thirst for knowledge, to broaden my contributions to my organization and to my customers.

Karin Cross-

experience. I apply the analysis of a character's motivation, relationships, conflict resolution,

fortunate to have had professors that provided valuable insight and made me a better writer.

David B. Frank, criminal lawyer

I was a double major in Health & Society and English, and my career path has involved multiple settings in health care. For the past 15 years, however, I have fulfilled multiple roles conducting and directing health services research efforts. In this work, my English background has been no less than essential, for two major reasons. First, health services research often involves detailed and meticulous synthesis of what *others* are saying about

drafts of opinions, jury instructions. I debated and discussed and persuaded and failed to persuade the judges I worked for. The English classes I took at the U of R proved invaluable during these clerkships as well as in law school, and not only because of the analytical and persuasive writing skills I gained. Struggling, for example, with Joyce's *Ulysses* or other works requiring the reader to piece together vast amounts of information and form some coherence out of the stories of unreliable narrators or fragmented plotlines, gave me the patience to piece together the conflicting and incomplete stories underlying every lawsuit, and the ability to derive pleasure from this fragmentation and narrative unreliability.... When my second clerkship ended last fall, I took a position in the litigation department of a law firm in New York. While classes on Modernism, medieval Celtic literature, and Shakespeare's late plays may not seem to have any role to play when I work on lawsuits between two giant banks, the skills discussed above come into play every day. My willingness and ability to speak my mind and argue my point of view with other lawyers were honed in these classes at the U of R. The way you and the other professors encouraged us to question, and to speak and articulate our thoughts without worrying whether what we said was intelligent or profound helped form what I think is one my most important skills. When a law school professor, a judge, or a partner at the law firm asks me what I think, I have something to say. I am not sure I would have the same degree of confidence and curiosity were it not for the English classes I took.

Michael Cabin, '06, litigation lawyer

I have to watch a lot of movies and TV for work (and because I'm an avid consumer of pop culture). Having an English major made _____ extremely enjoyable to watch for all the literary, some might say nerdy, references. All kidding aside, I think in a society and professional world that is becoming further and further integrated in social media and global communications having an English major is one of the most versatile

When students ask what they can do with a particular degree, I think it sometimes betrays a more general approach to life, one which is always wanting to “get something out of it” rather than enjoy it for itself, and let it lead where it leads. Joseph Campbell’s dictum to “follow your bliss” was often followed by his commenting that doing so would likely lead to poverty at some point, but the serious soul has no other option. The utilitarian approach which demands everything have a use or a purpose runs, in my mind, counter to what the humanities (and the sciences as well) ought to embody: a curiosity, a search for new ideas, an excitement about possibilities, a willingness to shatter the old beliefs when better ones arise, and an openness to what is. Right now I am reading Barbara Kingsolver’s *The Lacuna*. I am ghost-writing the memoirs of Remi De Roo, our retired bishop who was the youngest bishop to attend all four sessions of Vatican II back in the sixties. He is 88 now and has a lot to say, but English is not his first language.

Diane Tolomeo, '70, English Professor, retired, University of Victoria, B.C.

I live in a world of technology and finance. I love telling people I have a degree in English. They always underestimate me. I manage a derivatives trading platform for a top-tier custodian bank. This probably would have sounded pretty dull to my 20-year old self but I assure you it's anything but. The world is a fabulously complex place and Wall Street will always challenge your assumptions about how it works. Like everything else, movies do not do it justice....Even the most arduous programming languages are rudimentary when compared to the range of a human language. I was out of school for a few years before I fell into technology but I remember being surprised by the visceral pleasure of writing code. Similar to the way your mind feels when you've read something exquisite or written a poem. From there, I worked my way into system design, system architecture, enterprise architecture and project management. Though I compete for jobs against people with advanced engineering, computer science degrees and MBA's, I have always had an edge when it comes to communication. And the deeper I move into

I could go on and on, but to answer your second question about what has stayed with me from my UR studies, I can say unequivocally that the critical-thinking, writing and study-discipline skills taught to me (pardon the passive voice!) have made all the difference in my career and life. While I don't spend much time analyzing books these days, I constantly rely on and appreciate my education when it comes to presenting lectures, communicating with the incredible variety (culturally, academically, age) of students I have on a weekly basis, writing educational materials and being a (hopefully) thoughtful human being in a politically charged city. The high standards of work demonstrated by my professors and peers at UR have been and will always be a model for how I conduct my own teaching, what I expect from my students and how I attend to my artistic craft and daily life activities. Given the various educational environments I inhabit on a weekly basis, I first-