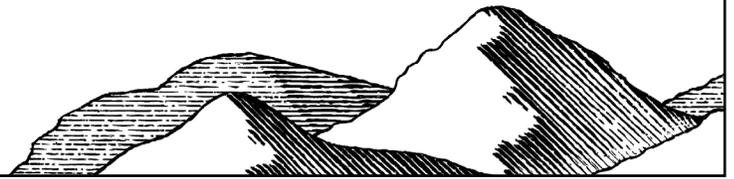


# INKWELL



THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE WRITING CENTER  
REPRINTED FROM *INKWELL* VOLUME 2 • EVERGREEN.EDU/WRITINGCENTER/INKWELL

## TIME-TRAVEL, STEAM-ENGINES, SUPER-POWERS: PRIME TIME

MATTHEW KREILING

Let us assume some powers. Time-travel and super-speed for starters. And flight. And x-ray vision. And the ability to split ourselves into two people. Why? So we can help a struggling freshman in 1994. Why are we interested in him? Because he is me. It is nighttime, the computer monitor glows in monochrome. Sounds of Portishead's "new" album, *Dummy*, leak through the many layers of impersonal dormitory paint. As we hover outside the third floor room, looking through the wall with our x-ray vision, our hearts break, remembering what it was like: the desperately blank screen, the baffling questions, "Why can't I write?...Why can't I think?" The scene is especially painful because I know who could help the freshman me of 1994...the writing tutor me of 2007. Three floors down, three thousand miles away, thirteen years in the future, in the "A" dorm at Evergreen, I am waiting for myself.

Because of its location, Freshperson Central, and its hours of operation, six to nine at night, Prime Time is particularly suited to the prematurely aging first-year student with a deadline, but it is also perfect for anyone who wants to work on their writing, share their writing, talk about their writing, or just talk. Officially, Prime Time is a satellite of the Writing Center and Academic Advising. Unofficially, it is headquarters for time-travelers. It is a warm place. This is not just because the heating system of the "A" dorm is fueled by brimstone. Prime Time has a warm personality. Strings of white and blue lights surround a whiteboard usually covered with quirky poems and drawings. The couches are comfortable. There are plants and funky lamps. People come in to help themselves to Italian sodas and a vegan brownie. And I am waiting there. Or Dan, Shawnie, Andrew, Jais, Liz, America, Ian, or Aislyn: tutors who could have asked for a schedule that kept their evenings free, but love Prime Time, being there at night to talk about writing. The other half of Prime Time, the Academic Advising half, is there too. Haley, the coolest academic advisor (I can say this because she has Sly & the Family Stone in her CD case), waits in her office to talk with students about anything from applying for a campus job to studying abroad in Zimbabwe. If Haley is busy, peer advisers like Tim or Amanda can advise in a peer-like manner.

Without superpowers, I've had to travel through time and space in the normal way: slowly, painfully, and eventually, westward in a broken down pick-up with all my stuff in the back. I've lost scholarships and found regrets. I don't want to say that all the moments of my life have led to this one, here in Prime Time, as a writing tutor, except for this: they have. Those moments spent staring at blank

screens, moments wondering why my brain wouldn't work the way I wanted it, mind-expanding moments and brain-cell-destroying moments (often the same moment), awkward moments trying to explain why I dropped out of college, moments of denial, moments realizing that the trouble with these moments was my addition of chemicals to them, moments of withdrawal, moments of serenity, and moments of chaos have all led to the dramatic and emotional moment of finishing this sentence. Thank god that's over. The point? I'm not sure yet. That moment will come. Hopefully before the end of this essay.

But this is an essay about Prime Time. And whether you are bothered by conjunctions at the beginnings of sentences or you are bothered by the fact that you don't know what a conjunction is, you are welcome at Prime Time. If you are on page twenty of a research paper or word one of a haiku, you are welcome. Before I build up to another dramatic and cheesy moment, let me have another tutor, Andrew Olmsted, put it another way: "We're totally laid-back & we're in your house." Tutors in Prime Time are in your house, literally if you live in "A" dorm, but also figuratively, because we are also students at Evergreen, with papers due. And let me re-iterate: "We're totally laid-back." If you wander to Prime Time on a Wednesday, at 8:00, the tutoring gently gives way to a poetry reading that is the epitome of laid-backedness. Yes, I said it: laid-backedness. Anybody, whether or not they call themselves poets, can lean back into the couch and vent verse out into the air as steam, or recollect it, a generator for powering next week's poem. No judgement, just steam, venting and collecting, like the wheezing boilers in the "A" dorm basement.

Of course, we're not always making up words willy-nilly, starting sentences with conjunctions, or acting like beatniks and steam-engines. We are available to sit with you one on one at a couch, a table or a computer, at any stage of your writing process, to help with any type of writing. At appropriate times throughout the year we provide "eval" workshops. Prime Time is also the venue for other workshops organized by Housing, KEY services, or Academic Advising. These workshops are held almost every week and range from crazy crockpot cooking to scholarship applications to finding a summer job to study abroad tips.

Now let us assume the power to teleport other people and teleport the me of 1994 to a room in the "A" dorm. It is very possible he won't notice, but just in case, let us also hypnotize him to think that he has lived in "A" dorm the entire quarter. While we're messing with his brain, we might as well make him thirsty. This way, he'll go downstairs for a drink, where I'll be disguised, leaning casually on the door to Prime Time.

Here comes 1994 me.

I hope the universe doesn't collapse.

"Would you like an Italian soda?" I ask him.

So far, so good. He takes a sip. It's delicious.

"Man, I just can't seem to get it together," he says.

“Don’t I know it,” I can’t help muttering.

“What?”

“Um...I said, ‘You don’t show it.’ What’s bothering you?” (Good cover.)

“It’s this paper...”

Finally. He’s come to the right place and it’s prime time.