

In this assignment you will analyze an urban legend, considering issues of authorship and audience. Pick ONE of the legends on the following page and answer these questions.

1. Who are the characters in this story? Are they sympathetic or unsympathetic, or neither? What assumptions about different types of people are reflected in this story?

2. Is there an obvious moral or message? What is it? Does the story end with a surprise twist? If so, which of our assumptions does the twist call into question? If the story is humorous, at whose expense is the joke?

3. Who might have made up this story, and why?

4. Does the story appeal to any particular community? Who might be likely to circulate it? Who would be the intended audience?

5. If you were going to tell this story to a different audience, which details might you add or change? Why?

## The Legends:

*While taking a final exam, a student raised his hand and demanded a glass of wine. When the instructor refused, the student pulled out a copy of the college's original rules and regulations (dated 1800) and pointed to a clause that stated all students were entitled to wine during exams. The instructor went to the local convenience store and returned with the wine. A week later the student received a disciplinary notice fining him \$50 for forgetting to bring his sword to the exam -- another of the rules from 1800.*

*An American tourist was vacationing at a five-star hotel beside a beautiful lake in Ireland. She asked a waiter, one of the locals, how the lake could possibly be so blue. The waiter told her -- with a straight face -- that every April, before the tourist season began, they drained the lake and painted the bottom blue. He had a good laugh with his friends and forgot about the incident. The next April the hotel was overrun with an unexpected wave of American tourists, all of them expecting to see "the lake-painting ceremony."*

*A man driving from Philadelphia to Washington, DC stopped to pick up a hitchhiker. The hitchhiker was an old man, unshaven and shabbily dressed, with several prominent scars on his face -- apparently a very disreputable character. After a while the driver began to get nervous and decided to pick up a second hitchhiker -- a well-dressed, clean-cut college boy -- for protection. As soon as they were on the road again, the college boy pulled out a gun and demanded all the driver's money; quick as a flash, the old bum grabbed the boy, seized the gun, and threw it out the window. The driver, feeling guilty at having misjudged the man, turned around to thank him. "Son," said the old man to the boy, "I've been in this business thirty years, and the first thing I learned was, never use that gun as a pointer." The driver stared at him. "Oh, don't worry," said the old man, "I only work in the Philadelphia area. I'm going home to DC for Christmas."*

*A woman parks her car at a shopping mall and returns to discover that she has a flat tire. There is no spare in her car. While she is wondering what to do, an attractive young man carrying a briefcase stops by and helps her put a temporary patch on the tire. Afterwards, he asks her for a ride to his own car at the other side of the parking lot. Although the woman is grateful, something about his manner makes her uneasy, so she tells him she's in a hurry and drives to the nearest garage to get the tire fixed. The garage attendant tells her that the tire was slashed deliberately. Later she discovers that the man left his briefcase in the back seat of her car. She opens it and finds a rope and a butcher knife.*

*A professor who taught a large lecture class was unusually strict about papers being handed in on time. One day a student arrived three minutes after the end of the period, term paper in hand. The Prof. refused to accept it, and told the student he would receive an F for the course. "Do you know who I am?" demanded the student arrogantly. "No," said the professor, "and what's more, I wouldn't care if you were the Prince of Wales." "I thought not," said the student. He thrust the paper into the middle of the stack of his classmates' assignments, and ran out of the building.*