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## ENG 100: The Escape from Cool

Pu Hsin Huang

Western Kentucky University, pushinhuang@gmail.com

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Eng100-Flagpole

## The Escape from Cool

Pushin Huang

“Do you think you can write other things  
that you can think about that I can read by my self?  
I just think it’s kind of cool.”

Dear Ms. Chen,

How are you? Recently, I saw a short film named *Flagpole* which makes me think of my senior high school life. One such scene plays out like this: “Hey, we are just wondering, what is flagpole? Is it your boner or something?” “What if she tries to give you a blow job? Would you get scared?” “Why are you so weird?” “Why do you get boner in class?” “Do you watch a lot of porn?” “Are you a pervert?” Our protagonist Zack is confronted by a couple of girls who bully him about a poem he had just written.

“One-third of the students engaged in any bullying at all — physical force, taunts or gossip-spreading — but those who were moving up the school popularity chain bullied more as they went higher. We found that status increases aggression.” says Faris, whose results are published in the new issue of the *American Sociological Review*.

Since the first day in high school, I observed every one and made guesses about who might be the “cool kids” in class. I chose to sit in the back because cool kids always sit in the back. I avoided having conversations with uncool kids even if they tried to talk to me. I joined the guitar club, where all the cool kids gathered, and tried hard to learn their arrogant tone, to roll my eyes when I got an assignment, and to despise people who seemed to be uncool. However, I just couldn’t come up with dirty jokes on time, failed to use their slang fluently and had difficulties speaking ill of people behind their back.

One day, there was an outdoor class after noon break. I didn’t hear the bell and kept sleeping. When I woke up, there was no one in the classroom. None of them woke me up. I still remembered that it was a beautiful summer afternoon. The flickering sun came through the trembling tree and the shadow moved smoothly on

the ground. The classroom was so quiet that I felt like time froze. I found myself so pathetic especially in such wonderful weather. Tears rolled in my eyes and I was so frustrated. I did my best to make people like me but I failed. I didn't find a new identity but I already had lost my original self.

I walked out the classroom by myself. High school peer relationship is god damn difficult.

After I entered college, I had more options of social groups rather than being tied up with the same group of people for three years. I gradually understood every individual is unique and irreplaceable. The most important trait you need to possess to be cool is being confident. Also, I really want to ask the popular kids in high school, why do you hate school so much? Why is it so hard for you to treat people a little nicer?

According to Joseph P. Allen, Hugh P. Kelly, professor of Psychology at the University of Virginia:

“It appears that while so-called cool teens' behavior might have been linked to early popularity, over time, these teens needed more and more extreme behaviors to try to appear cool, at least to a subgroup of other teens. So they became involved in more serious criminal behavior and alcohol and drug use as adolescence progressed. These previously cool teens appeared less competent--socially and otherwise--than their less cool peers by the time they reached young adulthood.

I recommend you to show this short film to your class. In this film, the uncool protagonist seems to be a little socially awkward among the popular kids. He fell in love with a cool girl but failed to express his feeling in an acceptable way. He was taunted by others and I believe those feelings will stay with him until the day he dies, or at least until he graduates. If he can write down what he thought at the beginning of the film-- “She looks really good today. She looks awesome. It's a cool shirt. She looks good in yellow. I feel like she wore that before. I think she was wearing it the first time I saw her. Maybe it was a different shirt. It was seven years ago. It was

definitely yellow though.” It would be a great poem. At the end of the film, seeing that he was treated nicely by the girl he liked gives the audiences a warm feeling and also makes people feel like everyone has the right to express his or her feeling without caring about how those irrelevant people think. By watching this film, maybe your students would be able to shed light on their tumultuous social relationship and figure out how to stay in their true self in crowd.

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