

Optional Supplemental
Readings and Activities

for

**English III, English IV,
Technical Writing, and
Business English**

Name: _____ Class: _____

The Science of Solitary Confinement

By Joseph Stromberg
2014

Solitary confinement is the isolation of a prisoner from any form of human contact. This 2014 informational text explores how solitary confinement affects prisoners and the role it plays in the American prison system. As you read, take notes on how prisoners are mentally and physically affected by solitary confinement.

- [1] Picture MetLife Stadium, the New Jersey venue that hosted the Super Bowl earlier this month [February 2104]. It seats 82,556 people in total, making it the largest stadium in the NFL.

Imagine the crowd it takes to fill that enormous stadium. That, give or take a thousand, is the number of men and women held in solitary confinement in prisons across the U.S.

Although the practice has been largely discontinued in most countries, it's become increasingly routine over the past few decades within the American prison system. Once employed largely as a short-term punishment, it's now regularly used as a way of disciplining prisoners indefinitely, isolating them during ongoing investigations, coercing them into cooperating with interrogations and even separating them from perceived threats within the prison population at their request.



"Solitary Confinement" by Eric Smith is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

As the number of prisoners in solitary has exploded, psychologists and neuroscientists have attempted to understand the ways in which a complete lack of human contact changes us over the long term. According to a panel of scientists that recently spoke at the American Association for the Advancement of Science's annual meeting in Chicago, research tells us that solitary is both ineffective as a rehabilitation technique and indelibly¹ harmful to the mental health of those detained.

- [5] "The United States, in many ways, is an outlier in the world," said Craig Haney, a psychologist at UC Santa Cruz who's spent the last few decades studying the mental effects of the prison system, especially solitary confinement. "We really are the only country that resorts regularly, and on a long-term basis, to this form of punitive² confinement. Ironically, we spend very little time analyzing the effects of it."

1. **Indelible (adjective):** not able to be forgotten or removed
2. **Punitive (adjective):** inflicting or intended as punishment

Exact numbers are hard to come by, but based on a wide swath of censuses, it's estimated that between 80,000 and 81,000 prisoners are in some form of solitary confinement nationwide. In contrast to stereotypes of isolated prisoners as the most dangerous criminals, Haney estimates that a third of isolated prisoners are mentally ill, and a disproportionate number are minorities, partly because alleged gang membership is grounds for placing a prisoner in solitary indefinitely.

The physical details of an isolated prisoner's daily experience are worth examining. "Prisoners live in their cells, 80 square feet on average — a bit bigger than a king-sized bed. In this environment, you sleep, you eat, you defecate, you live all of your life," Haney said. Most prisoners spent at least 23 hours per day in this environment, devoid of stimuli (some are allowed in a yard or indoor area for an hour or less daily), and are denied physical contact on visits from friends and family, so they may go years or decades without touching another human, apart from when they're placed in physical restraints by guards.

This sort of existence takes a clear toll on prisoners, according to surveys and interviews Haney and colleagues have conducted with about 500 of those in isolation from four different states. Their work indicates that most of these prisoners suffer from severe psychological stress that begins when they're put in isolation and doesn't subside over time.

A majority of those surveyed experienced symptoms such as dizziness, heart palpitations,³ chronic depression, while 41 percent reported hallucinations, and 27 percent had suicidal thoughts — all levels significantly higher than those of the overall prison populations. An unrelated study published last week found that isolated inmates are seven times more likely to hurt or kill themselves than inmates at large.

- [10] These effects, Haney says, don't only show how isolation harms inmates — they tell us that it achieves the opposite of the supposed goal of rehabilitating them for re-entry into society. "We are all social beings, and people who are in environments that deny the opportunity to interact in meaningful ways with others begin to lose a sense of self, of their own identity," he said. "They begin to withdraw from the little amount of social contact that they are allowed to have, because social stimulation, over time, becomes anxiety-arousing."

Huda Akil, a neuroscientist at the University of Michigan, is interested in the neurological impacts of isolation, but is limited by the fact that no U.S. prison is willing to allow its otherwise isolated prisoners to take part in research. Instead, she and others must rely on more basic findings about how stimulation and social interaction affect the brain, and infer the potential impacts of isolation from that.

For one, there's the fact that a large amount of brain activity is driven by circadian rhythms,⁴ which are in turn set by exposure to the sun. Autopsies on people who have committed suicide after suffering from depression have shown that, in their brains, gene expression⁵ is significantly less aligned with circadian rhythms; other research has shown that restricting exposure to sunlight (and thereby interfering with circadian rhythms) increases the prevalence of depression. Thus, if inmates are already prone to depression, solitary probably makes them more so, she says. The proper functioning of the brain depends on daily sun exposure, potentially explaining some of the symptoms experienced by prisoners in isolation, many of whom rarely see the sun.

3. noticeably rapid, strong, or irregular heartbeats due to agitation

4. physical, mental, and behavioral changes that follow a 24-hour cycle, responding primarily to light and darkness

5. the process by which information from a gene is used in the composition of a functional gene product

There are also troubling neurological implications of long-term isolation that stem from the fact that brain architecture can change over time. The hippocampus,⁶ in particular, has been found to dramatically shrink in the brains of people who are depressed or stressed for extended periods, a concern because it's crucially involved in memory, geographic orientation, cognition and decision-making. No one has performed an autopsy on a person who lived in isolation for decades, suffering from depression the whole time, but Akil believes that in keeping inmates in full isolation, authorities are "ruining a very critical component of the brain that's sensitive to stress."

Apart from scientists, the Chicago panel featured activist Robert King, who spent 29 years isolated in a six-by-nine-foot cell in a Louisiana prison before his murder conviction was overturned in 2001. Although he endured solitary confinement more successfully than most, he says — he maintained a hopeful attitude and never considering hurting himself — he experienced unmistakable physiological changes.

- [15] Most dramatically, King has difficulty navigating open spaces. "I lost the ability to meet with a broader terrain. I had become acclimated to shorter distances," he said, attributing this change to the shrinkage of his hippocampus, "I cannot, even to this day, acclimate myself to broader distance. My geography is really shot." His eyesight also deteriorated to the point where he was nearly blind, though it's gradually improved since he was released.

It's impossible to say how isolated prisoners as a whole fare compared to King, because there's no systematic collection of data on their well-being in the U.S. prison system. But the researchers argue that just these hints of the damage wrought by solitary confinement — and the way it seems to make prisoners less-equipped to re-enter society after their sentence — indicate that it falls within a category of discipline banned by the eighth amendment: cruel and unusual punishment. "It seems to me that it is time for us to have a serious discussion about the wisdom and humanity of this policy in the United States," Haney said.

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6. the part of the brain associated with emotions and memory

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the main idea of the text?
 - A. Scientists have been unable to provide evidence of a link between isolation and brain development.
 - B. While some prisoners react negatively to solitary confinement, the process is necessary for their protection and the protection of others.
 - C. Solitary confinement is an appropriate response to violent or dangerous criminals, as it is intended to punish prisoners for their actions.
 - D. The damage that solitary confinement is speculated to have on mental processes makes it an inappropriate form of punishment for anyone.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "We really are the only country that resorts regularly, and on a long-term basis, to this form of punitive confinement. Ironically, we spend very little time analyzing the effects of it." (Paragraph 5)
 - B. "Their work indicates that most of these prisoners suffer from severe psychological stress that begins when they're put in isolation and doesn't subside over time." (Paragraph 8)
 - C. "Instead, she and others must rely on more basic findings about how stimulation and social interaction affect the brain, and infer the potential impacts of isolation from that." (Paragraph 11)
 - D. "It's impossible to say how isolated prisoners fare as a whole fare compared to King, because there's no systematic collection of data on their well-being in the U.S. prison system." (Paragraph 16)

3. PART A: How does the inclusion of Robert King's experiences contribute to the text?
 - A. It shows that people subjected to solitary confinement can recover.
 - B. It proves that solitary confinement is not being administered as a safety measure.
 - C. It emphasizes how permanently damaging solitary confinement can be.
 - D. It stresses the importance of people coming forward about their experiences in solitary confinement.

4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "activist Robert King, who spent 29 years isolated in a six-by-nine-foot cell in a Louisiana prison before his murder conviction was overturned in 2001." (Paragraph 14)
 - B. "he endured solitary confinement more successfully than most, he says — he maintained a hopeful attitude and never considering hurting himself" (Paragraph 14)
 - C. "I cannot, even to this day, acclimate myself to broader distance. My geography is really shot." (Paragraph 15)
 - D. "because there's no systematic collection of data on their well-being in the U.S. prison system." (Paragraph 16)

5. How do the results of solitary confinement differ from the overarching goals of the American prison system?

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Sleepy Suspects Are Way More Likely to Falsely Confess to a Crime

By Adam Hoffman
2016

Sleep deprivation is a common form of interrogation used by law enforcement to extract information from suspects. But how accurate is the information? This article from Smithsonian Magazine discusses the use of sleep deprivation in interrogation. As you read, take notes on how sleep deprivation affects suspects' mental processes.

[1] Figuring out whether someone is guilty of a crime isn't a straightforward task. Juries are often asked to reach a verdict in the face of unreliable eyewitness testimony and contradicting evidence. That ambiguity can lead to a shocking number of wrongful convictions, as dissections of high-profile trials in the NPR podcast *Serial* and the Netflix documentary *Making a Murderer* reveal.



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But when someone confesses, a guilty verdict seems justified. No suspect would ever admit to a crime they didn't commit... right? Guess again. Studies have shown that false confessions contribute to as much as a quarter of known wrongful convictions. Now, the latest work suggests that a good amount of those false confessions may be due to a common interrogation technique: sleep deprivation.

Interrogators sometimes resort to extreme, morally questionable measures to extract criminal confessions, including deafening noise, intense emotional manipulations and withholding food, water and rest.

"Many of these interrogations involve these extreme techniques," says study coauthor Elizabeth Loftus, a psychology and social behavior professor at the University of California, Irvine. "Given that many people are often interrogated when they are sleepy after long periods of staying up, there is a worry that investigators may be getting bad information from innocent people."

[5] Around 17 percent of interrogations happen between the normal sleeping hours of midnight and 8:00 a.m. According to previous work, the majority of false confessions pop up after interrogations lasting longer than 12 hours, with many exceeding 24 hours. That suggests plenty of suspects are sleep deprived while they are being questioned.

In the new study, 88 participants were asked to complete a series of trivial computer tasks over the course of three sessions. At the beginning of each session, they were repeatedly warned not to press the "escape" key on the computer keyboard, or all the experimental data would be lost.

“To dissuade¹ participants who may have been tempted to press the forbidden escape key, a member of the research staff watched as participants completed the computer tasks,” the authors write in their paper.

After the second session, half of the participants slept for eight hours while the other half were forced to stay up all night. The following day, all participants were told to sign a written statement in which they were falsely accused of pressing escape during the first visit to the lab. If they refused, they were given a second opportunity to confess to this fabricated crime.

The sleep-deprived subjects were 4.5 times more likely to falsely confess — 50 percent of them caved in to the demands of the researchers, while only 18 percent of the well-rested subjects admitted to the wrongdoing, the researchers report this week in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

- [10] When those strong-willed individuals who refused to sign were prodded a second time, the sleep-deprived subjects were 3.4 times more likely to own up to the crime — their numbers jumped to a total of 68.2 percent, while their rested counterparts rose to just 38.6 percent.

“There are a lot of cognitive² tasks that are impaired when people are sleep deprived,” says Loftus. “Reaction times, judgment and problem solving, for example.”

Previous research also suggests that sleep deprivation impairs our ability to anticipate the consequences of our actions, to resist suggestive influences that might produce false and distorted memories and to inhibit impulsive behaviors. A subsequent analysis by the same team revealed that subjects who were naturally impulsive were more likely to falsely confess when sleep deprived.

For this study, the consequences were less severe than prison time — just the shame of potentially compromising the study-within-a-study. But Loftus believes the results still apply to crime fighting.

“We were interested in how the different variables affect the likelihood of confession,” says Loftus. “And I don’t have any reason to believe that sleep deprivation is going to affect behavior differently in this kind of a setting as compared to a real-world setting.”

- [15] So what motivates people facing more serious charges to confess to something they didn't do?

“There are two types of false confessions that come about from police interrogation,” says Saul Kassin, a professor of psychology at Williams College who reviewed the study before publication. The first is a compliant false confession.

“These are situations in which people who know they are innocent reach their breaking point,” he says. “They are under stress and will do whatever it takes to escape the immediate short-term punishing situation — even if it involves a possible negative consequence later.”

The second is an internalized false confession, in which the innocent person not only confesses but actually starts to believe their own guilt.

1. **Dissuade** (*verb*): to persuade someone not to take a course of action
2. relating to mental processes

"The police are allowed to lie to people," says Loftus. "They tell them that their fingerprints were at the scene when they weren't, that they flunked a polygraph³ when they didn't, that an eye witness saw them do it when there is no such person. And these are powerful ways of getting people to believe what they are confessing to."

- [20] Both these types of false confession are influenced by sleep deprivation, adds Kassin: "When people are mentally and physically fatigued, which is what happens in a sleep deprivation situation, they are more likely to do whatever it takes to end a punishing current situation than someone who has more mental energy to fight," he says. "They are also more suggestible to misleading or false information about evidence that doesn't really exist."

People also sometimes falsely confess because they want the attention associated with a high-profile crime. "That's how you get 200 people confessing to kidnapping the Lindbergh baby," says Loftus, referring to the infamous 1932 abduction and murder of aviator Charles Lindbergh's son. "But that's obviously not going on in this experiment."

Based on their findings, the researchers recommend that law enforcement officials evaluate suspects for their degree of sleepiness before an interrogation. The team also urged that all interrogations be videotaped so that judges, lawyers and juries can assess the value of the confession.

Still, law enforcement officials are unlikely to alter their tactics anytime soon, says Loftus: "There is obviously a belief that sleep-deprived interrogations help capture the guilty better. Otherwise this wouldn't be used so frequently."

Future work might investigate how sleep deprivation affects true versus false confessions, and how education, age and other demographics may influence the likelihood of a false confession from a sleepy suspect. The hope is that innocent people will get better protection, and investigators won't waste any time finding the real criminals.

- [25] "Interrogation is a great process when everyone you interrogate is the criminal," says Kassin. "The problem is, law enforcement doesn't know in advance whether they are interrogating the perpetrator or an innocent person. They always think they are interrogating the perpetrator, but they may not be. And this is what makes it so important to protect against that worst-case scenario."

["Sleepy Suspects Are Way More Likely to Falsely Confess to a Crime."](#) Copyright 2016 Smithsonian Institution. Reprinted with permission from Smithsonian Enterprises. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any medium is strictly prohibited without permission from Smithsonian Institution.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the main idea of the text? [RI.2]
 - A. Sleep deprivation is a tactic that lowers a suspect's mental defenses, allowing interrogators to extract the truth from them.
 - B. Interrogators use sleep deprivation as a way to extract false confessions from suspects when they don't know who is responsible for a crime.
 - C. Sleep deprivation can cause distress in the body and mind, which makes suspects unable to understand what they are saying or the consequences of their confession.
 - D. Suspects are more likely to remember details from a crime they committed when they are sleepy, as their mind and body are relaxed.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A? [RI.1]
 - A. "They tell them that their fingerprints were at the scene when they weren't, that they flunked a polygraph when they didn't, that an eye witness saw them do it when there is no such person." (Paragraph 19)
 - B. "When people are mentally and physically fatigued, which is what happens in a sleep deprivation situation, they are more likely to do whatever it takes to end a punishing current situation" (Paragraph 20)
 - C. "People also sometimes falsely confess because they want the attention associated with a high-profile crime." (Paragraph 21)
 - D. "Still, law enforcement officials are unlikely to alter their tactics anytime soon, says Loftus: 'There is obviously a belief that sleep-deprived interrogations help capture the guilty better.'" (Paragraph 23)

3. Which statement best summarizes the procedure of the study reported in Proceedings of the National Academy of Science? [RI.2]
 - A. All participants were deprived of sleep before being asked to complete tasks on a computer, during which their errors were counted.
 - B. Some participants were asked to confess to hitting the escape key after completing tasks, and their responses to this request were measured in relation to how much they had slept in the days before the study began.
 - C. Two groups were asked to complete tasks on a computer without hitting the escape key, one group was then required to go a night without sleep, and members of both groups were asked to confess to hitting the escape key.
 - D. Individuals who had falsely confessed to crimes were given a task on a computer and then accused of doing the task incorrectly on purpose to see if they were more likely to falsely confess again.

4. How does the detail about the Lindbergh kidnapping contribute to the text (Paragraph 21)? [RI.3]
- A. It proves that there are instances in which sleep deprivation needs to be used in interrogations.
 - B. It emphasizes that false confessions usually come from people who want the attention.
 - C. It shows that there is a variety of psychological factors that contribute to why a person would falsely confess to a crime.
 - D. It stresses how detrimental false confessions can be to the investigation of a crime.

5. How does the author support the claim that using sleep deprivation as an interrogation technique is morally questionable? [RI.8]

Name: _____ Class: _____

Teaching Shakespeare in a Maximum Security Prison

By Michel Martin
2013

In this National Public Radio interview hosted by Michel Martin, Professor Laura Bates discusses her decision to teach Shakespeare in a maximum security prison as a way of educating inmates—and discovering new insights into the Bard's drama. As you read, take notes on the perspective behind Bates' approach to teaching Shakespeare in this setting and other central ideas in the text.

[1] Many people thought Laura Bates was out of her mind when she offered to teach Shakespeare in the maximum security wing of an Indiana prison. But the prisoners found a deep connection with the playwright's words. Laura Bates talks about her experience in her new book *Shakespeare Saved My Life: Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard*.¹ She speaks with host Michel Martin.



"Bibliothèque de prison - Prison library" by Michael is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

MICHEL MARTIN, HOST: I'm Michel Martin and this is "TELL ME MORE" from NPR News. We want to talk about Shakespeare now, so quick: what does that bring to mind? Maybe you think about struggling to get through sophomore English. Maybe you think about well-trained actors performing in beautifully appointed theaters, but what probably does not come to mind are convicted murderers in some of the most restrictive circumstances in the country. But that's actually where Laura Bates chose to teach when she volunteered to teach English in Indiana's Wabash Valley Correctional Facility. And not just there, but in the super max facility where some of the most notorious² prisoners were held.

How she came to teach Shakespeare there and what she learned herself from that experience is the subject of her new book, *Shakespeare Saved My Life: Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard*. And Laura Bates is with us now.

Welcome. Thank you so much for joining us.

[5] **LAURA BATES:** Thank you for having me, Michel.

MARTIN: I think we should answer the question that most people are going to have, which is, what gave you the idea to teach Shakespeare, not just to people who are in prison, but people who are considered the worst of the worst, the people who are in the most restrictive circumstances?

1. "The Bard" is a nickname for Shakespeare. In medieval Gaelic and British culture, it means a professional poet or story teller.
 2. **Notorious (adjective):** famous or well known, typically for some bad quality or deed

BATES: Exactly. And that is the phrase that is often used, the worst of the worst. Here in the state of Indiana, we have a few super max units and they do house what are considered to be the most violent offenders throughout the state of Indiana, and I didn't even know there was such a unit. It was a shock and a learning experience to me when I discovered this unit even existed.

And briefly, what happened was I was teaching freshman English classes at the facility, Wabash Valley, for prisoners in the general population. I was a part-time professor at the time at Indiana State University. In those days, we had a college degree granting program for prisoners, and one of my students got in trouble and he was taken out of class and I started to ask around. You know, where's Don? What happened to him? Where'd he go? And my prisoner-students told me about this unit, this highly restricted unit, super max, and that's where my student, Don, had been sent.

So I was told at the time, well, there's no education in this unit. No teacher has ever gone into this unit. So, of course, that made me want to get into that unit. I asked for permission from the administration and the warden³ at the time knew me and knew me to be, you know, a good college professor for many years. He literally opened that door for me and ended up inviting me to begin a voluntary program based on Shakespeare, which is my specialty, for these inmates that not only are the worst of the worst, at least in the eyes of the public, but more importantly, in my own eyes, they were the ones that needed education the most. They had the greatest need for education and for really any kind of programming and, ironically, they had the least available to them.

[10] So these are the prisoners who, over and over and over, have been told that they are not capable, that they are certainly not intelligent, that they are not able to take on these kinds of, you know, intellectual challenges and so here comes somebody from the street knocking on their cell door and saying, hi, would you like to read some Shakespeare?

So, initially, that gets their attention.

(LAUGHTER)

Who are you and what do you want? And that confused a lot of them and, really, what happened was a wonderful word of mouth within the prison setting itself. I kept telling my husband, if only I can get one. I just want one prisoner, you know, who's willing to take this on and, if I can, you know, demonstrate to both the prisoner population and the administration itself that this is successful, then it's going to grow. And, goodness, it grew. It grew to where we had 50 people on the waiting list at one point.

MARTIN: Well, you know, what got me is that people—I thought it was hilarious—is that—well, I thought it was funny because it didn't happen to me. But you describe how people, like, literally slammed doors in your face. You know, you kind of have this idea that, you know, people would be hungry for something to do, but when you raise this, you literally went knocking on the steel doors...

[15] **BATES:** Yeah, yeah.

3. **Warden** (*noun*): the head official in charge of a prison

MARTIN: ...asking if anybody wanted to read. And there—a couple of people literally slammed the door in your face, but a few people did give it a shot and you started with *Macbeth*.⁴ What do you think it was about this play? And from almost instantly, the people who did agree to study the work immediately got it and had some really powerful insights and you were saying, gosh, some of their insights were beyond those of students who you'd been teaching for years. What is it about that play you think just grabbed people right off the bat?

BATES: And I have to say some of their insights were beyond those of world-renowned professors I've studied with—from whom I've learned a great deal. But these prisoners were able to make sense of some passages that professional Shakespeare scholars have struggled with for 400 years.

Well, the play *Macbeth*, I chose it partly because it does have a subject matter that these prisoners I felt would relate to. It is a story of a good man, Macbeth is a good man, a good honorable general at the beginning of the story, but he is tempted by a number of outside influences. We might call them peer pressure. There are these weird women he encounters, the witches, that kind of fill his head with some ideas. And then that's reinforced by the nagging wife, all of this kind of urging him on to kill the king in order to become king himself. But throughout the play, what's wonderful about this play is that there are so many moments where Macbeth himself recognizes this is wrong, I might be tempted, I might have ambitions, but to kill a good man is not the right way to go. And so what happened was the prisoners on the one hand got caught up in the story. It is an action-packed drama. But ultimately they found themselves relating not only to the characters' actions but to that inner struggle, and as they analyzed Macbeth's motives, why he's giving in to do something that he knows that he doesn't want to do, it made them question their own motive. And one of the prisoners said in so many words, the more insight you get into Shakespeare's characters, the more insight you get into your own character.

MARTIN: If you're just joining us, I'm speaking with English professor Laura Bates. We're talking about her new book *Shakespeare Saved My Life: Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard*.

[20] You focus a lot of the book on—and I think the title comes from here too—is your friendship with one of the prison's, you know, again, we're using this kind of loaded language, but notorious prisoner, somebody named Larry Newton. And you weren't sure that even you could reach him when you first met. But he turned out to be a remarkable student. He impressed you as soon as you started talking to him about *Richard II*.⁵ And he eventually wrote a number of workbooks...

BATES: Yes.

MARTIN: ...that you then used in the program and that other people can use in other programs too. Could you talk a little bit about him?

4. *Macbeth* is a Shakespearian tragedy about a Scottish general, Macbeth, whose ambition to be king eventually leads to his downfall.

5. *King Richard II* is one of Shakespeare's historical plays, based on the life of King Richard II of England (ruled 1377–1399).

BATES: Absolutely. In fact, one of the results of publishing this book I hope will be that we get some of these other materials—these workbooks that Larry and I created together. I hope we get those out into a wider audience because I am using them, not only in the other prisons that I'm working with now throughout the state of Indiana, and I'm even working now in the Federal Bureau Of Prisons, I'm using his workbooks even with college students on campus and with area high school students. So it has a wide, wide range of appeal. What Larry's basic approach was exactly that idea, that getting insight into Shakespeare's characters, providing insight into your own characters. So he and I together created full length workbooks to 13 of Shakespeare's plays. And in each of those workbooks there is a day by day what he calls considerations, a point to consider in the play that involves examining the motives of the character and always bringing it right back to your own motives and your own choices.

And one of the most remarkable projects actually dealt with the play of *Romeo and Juliet*.⁶ In the introduction you mentioned struggling through sophomore English classes and most of your listeners I'm sure can remember a similar experience. And too often in high school the approach that is taken to a play like *Romeo and Juliet* is sort of the what I call the lovey-dovey stuff, the love story, the idealized, you know, suicide of these teenage lovers. But through my work with the prisoners I really found that a part that is so often overlooked is the violent society in which a teenager like Romeo ends up becoming actually a serial killer. He kills more than once throughout that play and he's a good kid, he's a good young man, and yet by looking at the kind of society that he grows up in, I think could really be a powerful opportunity for high school teachers across the country to use the play of *Romeo and Juliet* to discuss this extremely important issue of teenage violence.

[25] **MARTIN:** Do you mind if I ask—why is Larry in prison?

BATES: Well, from the ages of 10, you know, he was in a super max situation at age 10, actually. He was locked in a concrete closet in the dark as a juvenile and I went to seek out that facility which, thank goodness, is no longer functioning. But back in the '80s, there was actually this kind of hard-core environment for kids. So between the ages of 10 and 17 he was in and out of juvenile facilities, so he had quite a long extensive record. A lot of things like runaways and vandalism and, you know, shoplifting, that sort of thing. Then at the age of 17 he and three other peers were arrested for a murder. Larry pled guilty 'cause he was at that time facing a death penalty. And evidence suggests that it may not have been him who was the actual person who pulled the trigger, it's uncertain, but he is doing a life without parole sentence. And he did also at the age of 17 waive his right to ever appeal the sentence. So he's going to be there forever, that's why he's in prison. Now, why he was a record 10 and a half years in segregation, solitary confinement, is because he did have quite an extensive history within the prison of violent behaviors.

MARTIN: Larry told you that Shakespeare saved his life. What did he mean by that? Can you tell us?

BATES: Sure. Absolutely. In fact, when I first heard that expression, I thought he was joking.

(LAUGHTER)

6. *Romeo and Juliet* is a Shakespearian tragedy about two star-crossed lovers from feuding families.

[30] He has a good sense of humor so I thought, oh, he's just being silly, being flippant. It wasn't until a few years after he made that comment that I was able to ask you him, you know, what did you really mean by that? To sum up briefly, he says that he meant it both ways, both figuratively as well as literally. And what I was not aware of the day that I came knocking on his cell door, his life had been so desperate, so bleak for so many years that he was literally at the point of suicide. And so in that sense by Shakespeare coming along, presenting something positive in his life for maybe the first time, giving him a new direction, it did literally keep him from taking his own life.

And you know, as I work with other prisoners, you know, if I feel that I've been able to turn their own lives around—remember, these are some of the most violent offenders in particular, I feel like it's not only saved the prisoner's life but it may very well save the future victim's life. So on a literal level we have Shakespeare saving lives. And then beyond that, Larry spoke about the more figurative, metaphorical way that Shakespeare just unlocked his mind in a sense, gave him a new positive way of looking at life. And as he said, in a figurative way Shakespeare generally freed him, so both literally and figuratively saved his life.

MARTIN: You do kind of get new respect for Shakespeare and his understanding of human behavior, right?

BATES: Yeah.

MARTIN: Because he really did seem to get it, like why it is that people behave the way they behave and the things that people do when they're guilty, and the things that people do when they're in a rage.

[35] **BATES:** Right.

MARTIN: And why people can have such poisonous feelings about other people and then regret it. You know, on the other hand, it really does, it sounds to me like you were able to see a lot of these men in—kind of in a three dimensional way, that they were more than just a jacket, you know, more than just a rap sheet of things that they had done.

BATES: Exactly.

MARTIN: That's interesting. But why do you think you were able to do this? I mean you don't brag on yourself in the book, I'll just say this, but you clearly were able to have a rapport.⁷ It did not faze you being there. You can see a lot of, you can understand why a lot of people would not be able to teach in that environment and certainly wouldn't have persisted to the degree that you did—because you really did. Why do you think you did?

7. **Rapport** (*noun*): relation; especially: a relationship marked by harmony or affinity

BATES: Well, I think part of it is due to my own background because actually I feel more comfortable in prison than on a college campus, because I grew up in, you know, in inner-city Chicago. The whole college atmosphere is something I was not familiar with, you know, my parents were not college educated, and my peers, you know, more of them spent time in prison than in college. So I think that was just a very comfortable environment for me, I guess, sad to say, whereas the typical college professor, you know, probably would feel more, you know, uncomfortable, I guess less familiar with that kind of a setting. And so I think from the get-go that establishes a bit of a rapport. But honestly, any volunteer that comes into a prison setting immediately has a good rapport from the beginning right there because the prisoners do recognize that, you know, you came here because you wanted to, nobody's paying you, you're not required and that's a huge start toward establishing a good rapport.

[40] **MARTIN:** I understand that Shakespeare's birthday is upon us.

BATES: Yes, it is.

MARTIN: April 23. How shall we celebrate knowing what we know now about how Shakespeare changed so many lives?

BATES: I think that's an excellent question. A wonderful thing to do on Shakespeare's birthday, I think, would be to take a look at any passage from Shakespeare from any play and maybe read it with someone who has not been introduced to Shakespeare before. Your own children, possibly a youngster in the family, or if you have access to prison, of course, to go in and maybe introduce it to someone who hasn't read it there, or maybe just a student, just to find some way that Shakespeare can relate to each of us, really, today.

MARTIN: Laura Bates is an assistant professor at Indiana State University. Her new book, *Shakespeare Saved My Life: Ten Years in Solitary with the Bard*, is out now. She joined us from member station WFIU in Bloomington, Indiana.

[45] Professor Bates, thank you so much for speaking with us.

BATES: Thank you for having me.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Summarize the central ideas of the interview on the lines below.

2. PART A: Reread paragraph 2. What is the host's likely purpose for beginning the interview segment in this way?
- A. By using rhetorical questions, the host is highlighting the ubiquity of Shakespeare.
 - B. By asking listeners to recall their associations with Shakespeare, the host is making the interview seem more relevant to the audience.
 - C. By bringing to mind more common associations with Shakespeare, the host is emphasizing the remarkableness of Bates' story.
 - D. By asking Bates about her own memories of Shakespeare, the host is attempting to learn more about the origins of her interest in Shakespeare.
3. PART B: Which quotation best supports the answer to Part A?
- A. "a deep connection with the playwright's words"
 - B. "Maybe you think about struggling to get through sophomore English"
 - C. "well-trained actors performing in beautifully appointed theaters"
 - D. "what probably does not come to mind are convicted murderers"
4. PART A: Which statement best explains why Bates teaches maximum-security prisoners?
- A. She strongly believes all people deserve a quality education.
 - B. She felt a personal connection to the prisoners.
 - C. She felt a sense of duty to take on the challenge despite reservations.
 - D. She enjoys learning about and exposing herself to dangerous and risky environments.

5. PART B: Which piece of evidence provides the best support for the answer to Part A?
- A. "...one of my students got in trouble and he was taken out of class and I started to ask around... And my prisoner-students told me about this unit" (Paragraph 8)
 - B. "No teacher has ever gone into this unit. So, of course, that made me want to get into that unit." (Paragraph 9)
 - C. "these inmates that not only are the worst of the worst, at least in the eyes of the public, but more importantly, in my own eyes..." (Paragraph 9)
 - D. "so here comes somebody from the street knocking on their cell door and saying, hi, would you like to read some Shakespeare?" (Paragraph 10)
6. Which statement best describes what Bates' work with the inmates helped reveal about the play *Romeo and Juliet*?
- A. It is often considered to be about romance, but can also be examined as a story about the impact of violent environments on youth.
 - B. It is often read as a play about teenage melodrama, but the focus should be shifted to the older generations in conflict.
 - C. It is often considered to be a play about teenage violence, but can also be read for its themes related to suicide.
 - D. It is often analyzed in an Elizabethan context, but should be analyzed for its modern application as well.
7. PART A: What does the word "jacket" most closely mean as it is used in paragraph 36?
- A. Appearance
 - B. Label
 - C. Disguise
 - D. Bad reputation
8. PART B: Which antonym for the meaning of the word "jacket," as it is used in paragraph 36, best helps the reader identify the answer to Part A?
- A. "poisonous feelings"
 - B. "three dimensional"
 - C. "rap sheet"
 - D. "things that they had done"

9. How did Shakespeare save the life of an inmate, literally and figuratively?

10. What do Martin's questions reveal about her point of view toward Bates' work?
