

Rhetoric and composition 1020

Profession, Teacher



Rhetoric and Composition 1020 18 September 2012 Ask any student in public high school what they like and dislike about school. Odds are, they will say that what they enjoy most about school is the social interactions it allows them to take part in, and what they dislike about school is the classes. John Taylor Gatto, in "Against School: How Public Education Cripples our Kids, and Why," discusses the reasons for such boredom in an in depth manner. Most of the time, nowadays, it is not the amount of work that they have developed a disliking for, it is the time that being in class wastes. Sitting in a class doing busy work is not something that interests people. The problem with schooling in this day in age, is that many of the students attending public schools are not being challenged and brought to their full potential. Teachers get bored of teaching and students get bored of doing work that is not going to benefit them in any way after they graduate high school. John Taylor Gatto gives a brief summary of the history of schooling and a suggestion that, in order to better our children academically, teachers need to urge their students to take on the work that may seem more "grown up." Schooling first started taking off in the United States between 1905 and 1915. American adapted its idea of public schooling from the Prussians, much like other parts of its culture. John Taylor Gatto states that the three reasons schooling came about was "to make good people, to make good citizens, and to make each person his or her personal best." In all reality, however, Gatto says that the worst thing taken from the Prussians was the schooling system. John Taylor Gatto brings about the question of "why is forced school necessary?" The "six classes a day, five days a week, nine months out of the year." He proves his point by saying that "two million

homeschool students turned out just fine, along with many other names that Americans can recognize such as: George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and Abraham Lincoln. " Gatto states that forced schooling only enforces a deadly routine. He also argues that while most people associate the term " success" with " schooling" there are many people who are just as successful as the next who have not had as much schooling as expected. He probes the questions: " why, then, do Americans confuse education with just such a system? What exactly is the purpose of our public schools? " John Taylor Gatto explains that we " so eagerly have adopted one of the very worst aspects of Prussian culture: an educational system deliberately designed to produce mediocre intellects, to hamstring the inner life, to deny students appreciable leadership skills, and to ensure docile and incomplete citizens—all in order to render the populace " manageable. " While schooling is provided to enhance the intellects, it really is only designed to create mediocre ones. Parents and students should not have to go through the schooling process if it is not going to push them to be their absolute best. Without the proper schooling, it is harder for anyone to begin a career. Gatto explains that teachers do not guide their students to reach their full potential, but rather just give them the information to reach it. Whether they choose to strive for excellence is their choice, but teachers in this century do not push them towards their goals. Ultimately, teachers need to care more about their students futures and academic success. Next, John Taylor Gatto introduces the logistics of public schooling and the actual purpose of forced schooling in six basic functions. These functions are " the adjustive or adaptive function" which establishes reactions to authority.

Teachers have the ability to teach their children to do anything, whether that is to learn or to do reckless things. Children look up to the teachers because they know that they are superior to them, therefore they react and respond to everything they say and do. It is difficult for parents to send their children to school because they are putting their trust in adults they have never met. Within forced schooling, it is likely that students and teachers disagree, and even more likely that a parent will intervene when they do not feel as if the teacher is responding adequately to the students needs. The second function is the “integrating” function. The schooling system is the definition of conformity. Children come to school everyday at the same time and perform almost identical basic functions in each classroom. They are taught when to talk, when to learn, when to eat, when to socialize, and they all listen and do what they are told and what is normal for them. Students see how other people are acting to certain situations, and then mimic those actions to blend in with the rest of the school. The “diagnostic and directive” function deals with social roles. During their schooling, children realize what role they play and where they fit in socially. Specifically, high school is the institution where students realize the kind of people they are and what groups they will belong to, what friends they will have, and what everyone else will think of them. The “differentiating” function sorts the students according to their role and they are only taught as far as they can be as a group and no further. Gatto states here that this undermines the purpose of pushing students to their personal best. The “selective” function is exactly what it sounds like — selection, like Darwinism. If a student falls short of academic expectations, they receive poor grades and other punishments. The purpose

of school is to enrich the students minds, and if they cannot do what is expected of them, they do not receive the benefits of those who do. The final function is the “ propaedeutic” function. This function states that ultimately some of the students who attend school for the full twelve years will carry out the roles of authority some day. Ultimately what John Taylor Gatto argues throughout this essay, is the idea that boredom derives from the source. If a student is bored, it is because he or she is not doing anything that excites themselves, and same goes for the teachers. He suggests that in order to improve the lives of both, teachers need to introduce harder materials to the students. Not only will it keep them occupied and far from boredom, it will encourage them to reach beyond what is easy. Work Cited Gatto, John Taylor. “ Against School: How Public Education Cripples our Kids, and Why. ” Harper’s Magazine. Sep. 2003: 33-38. Print.