Honors LA 10

February 24th, 2014

**Introduction**: *Freakonomics* is a research-based book that claims to “explore the hidden side of everything” by examining and interpreting data on subjects like marriage, happiness, hitchhiking, eating, sports, and names. Read the below excerpt and then answer the journal entry questions below in at least 1.5 pages of journal. **This is due at the beginning of class tomorrow, Tuesday February 25th.**

An Excerpt from *Freakonomics,* by Steven D. Levitt:

**Perfect Parenting, Part II; or: Would a Roshanda by Any Other Name Smell as Sweet?**

[T]hen there is the recent case of Temptress, a fifteen-year-old girl whose misdeeds landed her in Albany County Family Court in New York. The judge, W. Dennis Duggan, had long taken note of the strange names borne by some offenders. One teenage boy, Amcher, had been named for the first thing his parents saw upon reaching the hospital: the sign for Albany Medical Center Hospital Emergency Room. But Duggan considered Temptress the most outrageous name he had come across.

“I sent her out of the courtroom so I could talk to her mother about why she named her daughter Temptress,” the judge later recalled. “She said she was watching The Cosby Show and liked the young actress. I told her the actress’s name was actually Tempestt Bledsoe. She said she found that out later, that they had misspelled the name. I asked her if she knew what ‘temptress’ meant, and she said she also found that out at some later point. Her daughter was charged with ungovernable behavior, which included bringing men into the home while the mother was at work. I asked the mother if she had ever thought the daughter was living out her name. Most all of this went completely over her head.”

Was Temptress actually “living out her name,” as Judge Duggan saw it? Or would she have wound up in trouble even if her mother had called her Chastity?

It isn’t much of a stretch to assume that Temptress didn’t have ideal parents. Not only was her mother willing to name her Temptress in the first place, but she wasn’t smart enough to know what that word even meant. Nor is it so surprising, on some level, that a boy named Amcher would end up in family court. People who can’t be bothered to come up with a name for their child aren’t likely to be the best parents either.

So does the name you give your child affect his life? Or is it your life reflected in his name? In either case, what kind of signal does a child’s name send to the world—and most important, does it really matter?

Journal Entry: **What’s in a name?**

1. React to this story. What do you think the author’s point is? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?
2. Do our names influence our future? How?
3. Consider your first, middle and last names. Find out what those names mean. Ask your parents, your extended family, or look online. Then answer the following:
   1. Why were you named the way you were?
   2. From what region of the world did your name originate?
   3. Is your first or middle name a family name? Were they randomly chosen? Or do they say something about you or your family’s identity?
   4. If you could, would you change your name? If so, to what would you change it, and why?