

Part . Reading Comprehension: Respond to the questions based on the following essay. (40%)

“Why I Rue My Tattoo”

I got my second tattoo when I was 19. For two hours, I lay belly down, butt up, with my Levi's pulled low enough to have a good plumber look happening. Doc, the tatted-out, 50-something shop owner, hunched over my bum, his wiry gray hair dusting my skin and his buzzing, needled handpiece imprinting me with what turned out to be a permanent Rorschach inkblot. Not exactly the swirling design I initially had in mind. I wanted an image that was one part delicate, one part strong, like something you'd see on a fancy wrought-iron gate. Instead I was branded with an abstract, somewhat vulgar design with a point directed straight down my crack.

“Wow, it's great,” I said, lying through my teeth, still gritted from the needle's sting.

“Hot. Really hot,” Doc said. My friend Jessie, seated next to me and there for moral support, offered similar affirmations. But a little voice inside of my head said, Ugh.

It wasn't Doc's fault. He was a pro; I was the amateur, an amateur at thinking things through. I had thought I possessed that skill. It had been present a year earlier when, in the same chair, with Jessie by my side, I got my first tattoo, a good-luck ladybug southwest of my belly button.

Jessie and I got our first tats together to spice up our senior year at Catholic school. Three times before the appointment, I drove my 1988 Oldsmobile to the library, where I sat cross-legged in my uniform kilt, thumbing through books, looking for the perfect depiction. The spot I had chosen on my body was a bit clichéd but easily hidden from potential employers and by a wedding dress. (That was my mother's sole wish, which I granted because she was less than thrilled about the tattoo but didn't try to stop me.) When it was done, I loved it. I loved it even after someone pointed out that, thanks to the ladybug's tilt and placement, it looked as if a bug were crawling out of my underwear.

But when I got that second tattoo a year later, there was no research involved. I simply made a decision right before the lower-back-tattoo trend took off. To me, the tattoos, and those who sported them at the time, seemed tough — in a good way. If I got one, I thought, I would still be a nice girl, the occasional Ann Taylor shopper and A student, but I'd be drawing out the Sonic Youth-listening, beer-swiggling badass I also identified with.

I gave Doc the picture of the design, which I had found on a friend's T-shirt. He said it wouldn't reproduce with the same detail on my skin but that he'd sketch something similar that would. My critical mistakes came after that: The final design wasn't exactly what I wanted, but I convinced myself that it looked cool enough (mistake one). Not only was I too shy to ask for other sketches (two), but I was so eager to get the tattoo that I spent 30 seconds thinking it over after seeing the drawing (three). Once I saw the stencil on my skin, I thought, it will be fine. The Ugh voice was there, but I ignored it. Perhaps the voice, likely dressed in a cashmere sweater set, was being smothered by a badass in a concert tee.

In the weeks after, I lied to friends about my feelings. I even tried to convince myself that I liked the tattoo, that it conveyed the tough side I was desperate to show off to the world in order to balance my good-girl side.

A few months later, though, I started seeing girls everywhere (and not only the tough types that had initially inspired me) sporting lower-back tattoos. Mall rats in belly shirts, cheerleaders, sex sirens, moody emo-girls and preppy blondes all showed off ink when bending over to pick up their pom-poms/mix tapes/polo mallets. I had little in common with these girls before my tattoo, but now we were officially connected. My plan had backfired. Not only might people get the wrong idea about me, they might actually get the worst idea: that I was yet another too-trendy girl who thought tattoos were just, like, so cool. I might as well have asked for a tattoo that said “Trying too hard.”

國立中山大學 106 學年度碩士暨碩士專班招生考試試題

科目名稱：英文作文與閱讀【外文系碩士班甲組、乙組】

題號：412001

※本科目依簡章規定「不可以」使用計算機(問答申論題)

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Somewhere along the way, though, the regret started to fade. At first it was superficial realizations: I thought, At least I didn't get an ex-boyfriend's name or a Chinese character that instead of meaning beautiful symbolizes harlot. But then, as I graduated from college and began living on my own and flourishing in my career, I started to feel more comfortable with myself at a deeper level. I liked the person I had become and accepted all the decisions I had made along the way, including the tattoo. While at a friend's wedding, reflecting on how marriage would change her life, I began to ponder my own path and realized that I had, in fact, become a real badass. To me, that had nothing to do with listening to the right music, wearing the latest clothes or deciding to get my second tattoo — and everything to do with being fearless about my true self and accepting who I was, inside and out.

A decade later, I'm not embarrassed if my tattoo peeks out or friends make a joke. At my grandfather's funeral, for instance, I had to bow at the altar before giving my reading. I was wearing high-waisted pants (thank you, Marc Jacobs, for a rise of more than 8 inches) and a blouse I was certain fell beyond the safety zone. After mass, though, a cousin said, "Father Michael saw your tattoo, and he wanted me to tell you he's very disappointed." He then clapped me on the back and broke into a full belly laugh. I felt good, even honored, that the tattoo could provide joke fodder for my relatives — and that I could laugh, too.

When it comes to regrets, my tattoo falls somewhere between a misguided hookup and the time I drove after one too many beers. For it and all my other mistakes, I've forgiven myself — and instead of contemplating laser removal, I choose to look at the tattoo as a reminder of who I was and who I am now. Sure, I'll keep making mistakes, but I'm smart enough now to recognize and avoid those I may later come to regret. Why spend thousands of dollars erasing this bad decision when I could use the money to make good ones: traveling, helping a friend, buying more Marc Jacobs trousers? And as far as worrying about what people will think of me if they accidentally see my tattoo: If they don't also see that I'm a fun and empathetic friend, a smart woman and a kind and responsible person, then f--- 'em ; the badass in me doesn't care.
(Beth Janes, *MSNBC*, Oct. 4, 2007)

1. Why did the author get the second tattoo? (8%)
2. What were the mistakes the author made when she got the second tattoo? (8%)
3. Why did the author regret her second tattoo several months later? (8%)
4. How much does the author regret her second tattoo now? (8%)
5. What does the title of this essay mean? (8%)

Part 2. English Composition: Write an essay to explore the idea of tattoos as a form of self-expression that sets one apart from others, especially in the context of social prejudices against this practice. (60%)