A.O.W. #4**: Due: Monday**

**Directions**

1. Chunk the article into manageable (2 paragraphs max.) pieces. Number them. Don’t forget title/opening!
2. Highlight at least three words you are not familiar with or that are important and define them. (on back)
3. Show evidence of a close reading. Mark up the left side of the text chunks with questions and/or comments that demonstrate interacting with the text. You may also include any confusion you have.
4. Complete the attached graphic organizer to analyze author’s craft.

**Is it Okay to be Average?  by:  Dr. Tim Elmore** October 15, 2015 — www.growingleaders.com

Last year, a minor league manager said to me, “I can’t figure out our young ball players today. They hit .211 in single A ball, and think it’s good enough to be called up to double A.” Then, he smiled as if an epiphany had just struck him. He looked at me and said, “Maybe that’s the problem. All they’re targeting is ‘good enough.’” Our society today unwittingly encourages our kids to simply “blend in”—to do what’s asked of you, but only what’s asked of you. In fact, we condition them to do the bare minimum requirement to get by, to look for loopholes and shortcuts.

As a result, too many of our gifted young athletes, academicians, and other performers carry this “good enough” mindset with them. They are fine with being “average.” Certainly there are exceptions, but Walt Whitman noticed the same thing in his day. He wrote: “Our leading men are not much account and never have been. But the average of the people is immense, beyond all history. Sometimes I think, in all departments, literature and art included, that will be the way our superiority will exhibit itself. We will not have great individuals or great leaders but a great average bulk, unprecedentedly great.”

**So, is this bad or good? What’s wrong with being average? You tell me:**

* The average American today is 23 pounds overweight.
* The average American spends 103% of their income.
* The average American is $15,000 in debt.
* The average American tells 4 lies a day, or 1,460 a year.
* The average American spends 27.5 hours a week on entertainment.
* The average student takes 6 years to finish college, changing majors 4 times.
* And the average student moves back home after college.

**Why letting others set the standard for us can prevent our growth:**

* Being average is a moving target in society that can easily be diluted.
* An average goal rarely pushes us to use our talent to its fullest.
* Average makes us compare ourselves to others… and we’re unique.
* Average doesn’t push us to excel. In fact, quite the opposite: it produces a “good enough” mindset. We are OK with fitting into the “mean score.”

Being average means you’re as close to the bottom as you are to the top. You are the worst of the best and the best of the worst. Is that really you? Don’t you possess some ability or some ambition beyond average? Of course you do. Now leverage it.

**Be Above Average--The following ideas aren’t new or impossible. They are simply rare:**

1. Let “average” be your starting point.

It represents the middle of achievement. While we shouldn’t settle for average, we must see what others have done. Each generation stands on the shoulders of earlier ones. Roger Bannister began with Glenn Cunningham’s record in the mile.

**2.  Identify your strengths. Find the areas you’re naturally above average.**

Our greatest growth and best chance to stand out lie in the areas of our natural strengths. Michael Jordan said, “All I knew was I didn’t want to be average. I didn’t come here to be average.” We must know our unique traits and value.

**3.  Research enough to embrace an ideal and set a new standard.**

“Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people,” Eleanor Roosevelt said. I believe she’s right. We must not be satisfied in repeating what’s already been done. Look at new horizons and ask: why not?

**4. Determine a need and opportunity that matches your identity.**

Taylor Swift wrote, “I am intimidated by the idea of being average.” We must loathe being. This will help you see opportunity. It’s been said, “Don’t seek a passion. Chase opportunity, and you’ll naturally find it.”

**5. Each day, work to excel one percent above what you’ve done before.**

Find one step you can take each day that pushes you beyond average. “How do you win?” asked Bum Philips. “By getting average players to play good and good players to play great. That’s how you win.” Excellence occurs one step at a time.

**6. Give it all you’ve got until you’ve excelled and it’s recognized.**

The dream is free; the hustle is sold separately. The one element that separates dreamers from doers is effort. Anyone who’s ever taken a shower has gotten a good idea. The key is to dry off after the shower and go after it.

**7. Find and associate with people who share your ambitions.**

Jim Rohn said it best: “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” Those who excel always spend time around other excellent people. Henry Ford, Thomas Edison and Harvey Firestone took fishing trips together. All three changed the way we lived our lives.

**8. Avoid the soft bigotry of low expectations.**

Run from those who let you remain lazy and unchallenged. While we need days of rest, our best self surfaces in times of rigor. Like rubber bands, we are useful when stretched. We must live somewhere between stretched and overwhelmed.

The truth that is most intriguing to me is this—excelling is within anyone’s reach. Being “above average” is not difficult, just rare. Question: How long does it take the average person to earn a black belt? Answer: The average person does not earn a black belt. Think about it: Steve Jobs wasn’t necessarily the most intelligent person at Apple. He was just tenacious about excelling, and he pushed until his company led the way for others. William and Catherine Booth weren’t seeking their passion as they started the Salvation Army. It was an opportunity. They excelled at meeting the need. When Walt Disney took his daughters to ride a merry-go-round, he saw how pitiful it looked and wrote himself a note about the park he’d build one day: “No chipped paint; all horses go up and down.” Mother Teresa stood in a classroom and grew burdened by the sight of people dying outside her school window on the streets of Calcutta. It was merely what others accepted as normal, and one day, her dissatisfaction with this reality turned into action.

Be careful, though: don’t associate “above average” with fame or wealth or status. Think of the mothers or the plumbers who’ve demonstrated excellence in what they do, without ever getting rich or famous. What makes them great isn’t fame, but ambition and initiative. They make the effort to excel. Frank Dobie wrote, “The average PhD thesis is nothing but the transference of bones from one graveyard to another.” Don’t be satisfied with repeating what’s already been done. We must be able to say, “I woke up this morning and realized I don’t have what it takes to sit back and be average.” May we all learn to pursue this level of excellence as we impact the next generation.

**1. Author’s claim: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**2. Text Evidence (proof: stats, facts, examples)**

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**3. The author’s main purpose (inform, persuade, etc) is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**4. The author’s main audience (be specific) is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
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**5. The author establishes a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ tone(look at word choice) through the following techniques (refer to techniques list, but make it specific) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ,and\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**