

### Communication

To the editor:

Your article about high school courses had two statements that started one thinking. The first is: "By the time a 9th grader faces... college, 50% of what he has learned is obsolete."

The second was a reference to "out-dated facts." What I am pondering is this: Which particular bits of my own high school education are in the "obsolete" category, and which of the facts that I learned should be classified as "outdated."

Take trigonometry, for example. Do I discard the Pythagorean Theorem or the law of cosines? Or maybe I can keep both of these and throw out the law of sines and the definition of the tangent function.

In literature, should I not read any more Longfellow because poetry is too abstract for this modern age? Maybe we should forget Melville because it's just too much work to understand what he is saying. On the other hand, perhaps we should expunge some of those foreigners like Shakespeare and Dickens.

Which part of history is no longer necessary? Should ancient history be discarded because we (perhaps) have nothing to learn from the Greeks, the Romans, and the Hebrews? Maybe we should ignore world history entirely. But what about U.S. history? Isn't there room for cutting here also?

Perhaps it is of little value these days to try to understand those musty documents like the Declaration of Independence, the Mayflower Compact, and the Federalist Papers. After all, guys like Jefferson, Madison, and Hamilton lived before VCRs were invented, so what could they possibly teach us today? Maybe Henry Ford was right, that all history is bunk.

Which half of a high school physics course can we eliminate?? Let's see, matter still exists in three different states and light still travels at 186,000 miles per second. Guess we should keep those facts. Perhaps we no longer need those anti-

quated laws formulated by Sir Isaac Newton. After all, Newton's Second Law, force = mass x acceleration, is an equation, and it's common knowledge these days that all the important equations are conveniently stored in computers, so we don't need to understand the equations, just how to push buttons.

This is getting to be a long letter; maybe I'm making this out to be more complicated than it really is. I forgot about all those smart people on TV, like Dan Rather, who can explain everything to us, and tell us how we should think and what we should do. Maybe we don't need school at all!

Sincerely,  
Doug Brinson

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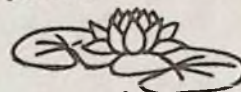
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