Famous Failures
Six Convincing Examples That Grades Aren't Everything
by LISA GREENBERG

Education is replete with examples of people who failed academically in one way or another but who achieved excellence and recognition nonetheless. So when your next paper is returned pulsating with four different colors of ink and you fail miserably on a minor technical component, take heart with these anecdotes.

Easy Essays
Essay exams may have gotten Washington Post reporter Carl Bernstein through high school. He was a terrible student in everything but English. "The only thing I could do was write," he once said. "I'd pass the essay exams and flunk the true-false."

Remedial English
Sir Winston Churchill, famous for his eloquent oratory, did not always have an impressive command of the English language. The late British prime minister flunked grammar in primary school. He credited his later mastery of the tongue to the help of an excellent remedial English teacher.

A Late Bloomer
Albert Einstein failed high school and was asked to leave because his "rebellious attitude" had a negative effect on other students. The independent thinker found it meaningless to memorize facts and grammar rules, so he lagged behind his classmates in most subjects. But he was light-years ahead of them in math.

Comic Relief
Woody Allen claims he never did a lick of homework. He spent all his spare time writing jokes. This artistic dedication went unappreciated by his teachers, who called his parents to school so often his classmates still recognize them on the street.

Thrown Out With Style
Buckminster Fuller would have been a fifth-generation Harvard man had he graduated. But he soon grew to loathe the closed social systems of the ivy-covered institution. Fuller wanted to leave the university, but with style. Merely flunking out or withdrawing would have been too mundane. While his classmates sweated over midyear exams, Fuller left for New York with his tuition money. He attracted the attention of several Ziegfeld showgirls by sending champagne and flowers to their dressing room, and treated the ladies in a lavish dinner that far exceeded the price of tuition. When word of his exploits and unpaid bills reached Harvard, Fuller was promptly expelled for "irresponsible conduct."

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