

AP4CTE AP Seminar: Building a Dynamic Workforce

Research Strategies for Innovating and Problem-solving Across Career Paths

Module 4

“The Unknown Citizen”

W.H. Auden

(To JS/07 M 378

This Marble Monument

Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

W.H. Auden was a famous poet, and is claimed by British and American literary traditions—born in York in 1907, Auden studied at Oxford before moving to the U.S. in 1939. He wrote prolifically in prose and poetry, critical often of modern society and traditional conventions. The “Unknown Citizen” was originally published in 1940 in the magazine, The New Yorker, and later included in the collection, Another Time.