

# The Document – Comps Halloween Edition!



## Comps Advice from the Pros

With Comprehensive Exams just around the corner, *The Document* took it upon itself to seek out the advice of a few of the nation's great minds on the topic of Comps and methods of preparation. We asked each participant the same three questions, and have prepared their kernels of wisdom for you, our loyal readers and friends.

### Rob Ford

1. Mr. Mayor, what is the first thing that comes to mind when one is about to partake in their comprehensive examinations?

*"Get off my lawn!"*

[After much convincing, Mayor Ford accepted that we were not from *The Star*, and were there in earnest to ask some legitimate questions – the interview thus continued...]

*"Stop the gravy train. If you are going to go about this whole comps mess, you need to respect the taxpayers of this city and not take advantage of the situation on the taxpayers' dime. Drive your own car to the exam – don't give the TTC one more cent than it deserves. Second, any coffee, doughnuts, candy-bars, what-have-you, that you intend to snack on during the exam, should all come from home. Thirdly, any stationary that you use, pens, paper, or otherwise, should also be from your own personal supply – I should take this opportunity to give you my card... If you need any decals or labels made up, I can cut you a sweetheart deal. But, that is it – stop the gravy train and bring respect for taxpayers."*

2. What would you suggest as a method for preparation on the day of the exam?

*"Subways, Subways, Subways! If you have been following the news, I have recently begun a new diet regimen. Following after the example of Jared, I have begun eating three, footlong, meatball subs at every meal. You see, I am no slouch at this stuff – I see Jared losing all that weight eating just one six-inch sub per day and I figure that I can beat that. So there. Point is, on the day of the exam, make sure you are well-fed. Subways, Subways, Subways!"*

3. How would you fit reading all of those books into your already busy schedule?

*"I am a busy man. People give me stuff to read all the time – Conflict of Interest Regulations, Staff Reports, Letters from Taxpayers demanding the removal or bike lanes – You can't possibly read it all, but you can do your best if you follow these easy guidelines. First, throw out and disregard any material you feel is a waste of time, stinks of gravy, or contradicts your gut-feeling on any particular issue. In other words, stick to your guns and don't let 'facts' get in the way. Second, if you are ever asked about the details of something you did not read, remind the examiners that you are very busy, and that it probably never made it across your desk. Third, find the time. When you are driving on the Gardiner or 401, either stuck in traffic, or cruising along at 120, flip open a book and just dig in. I find this the best way to make the most of my time. You could also take the odd call or two while doing this. I find it helps me organize my thoughts."*



### Don Cherry

1. Mr. Cherry, what is the first thing that comes to mind when one is about to partake in their comprehensive examinations?

*“You got to keep your chin up, kid. Stay Alert, and don’t be afraid to knock ‘em around a little. You know, the game has changed a lot since my time. Used to be a time when you would just show up, lace up, and just give it your best. But now they got all these fancy new rules and regulations... You at least know where you stand if you’re dealing with Canadian subject matter. Grit. Determination. The Fur Trade... All that good stuff is in there. Start with Champlain – Good Canadian boy – He knew what he was doing, didn’t let anyone push him around. French though, come to think of it... Huh. Well, you know what I am trying to say. You got to be careful if you’ve got to deal with any of them European players. Your Voltaires, your Rousseaus, your Kants, or your Lockes... Not only are they a bunch of pansy-pinkos, but they don’t know the first thing about anything how the game is played. If you can, try and keep it Canadian – the real deal.”*

2. What would you suggest as a... [Interrupted by Mr. Cherry]

*“On game day, you’ve really got to be prepared to give it 110 percent. And you can’t go out there expecting that the gloves are not going to come off – in fact, you had better be anticipating it, and give the first blow. Start off by dazzling your examiners with a brilliantly selected, three-piece ensemble, with as many contrasting and clashing colours as possible. A pink jacket, paired with an orange and blue plaid patterned vest, high collared shirt with a purple tie, and lime-green slacks ought to do it. Remember that is the first impression that counts. Secondly, remember to shout all of your responses back your oral examiners. Interrupt and cut them off at every opportunity. You want that exam to be at least 80-20 in your favour from a conversational viewpoint. Don’t let them get a word in edgewise. Last but not least, try your best to be insulting and abrasive. Profs love that from their students. If they have a funny last name, take advantage of that. If they talk with an accent, make pretend you can’t understand them. If they ask you something you don’t know, become indignant and demand the respect you deserve. Never give an inch.”*

3. How would you fit reading all of those books into your already busy schedule?

*“You think I got to be so great by reading a bunch of liberal artsy-fartsy books? You have another thing coming if you think Don Cherry got to be Don Cherry by reading, kid. You heard what I said: Give ‘em Hell, dress to impress, and talk as loud as possible.”*



### David Suzuki

1. Mr. Suzuki, what is the first thing that comes to mind when one is about to partake in their comprehensive examinations?

*"You see, the comprehensive exam process is like a delicate ecosystem. All of its disparate parts are in fact interconnected in a web of life. The books are the knowledge base from which your own database of thoughts are fed and fuelled; these files are in turn organized into bodies of thought and frames of reference based on an interwoven system of chronological, geographical, political, and cultural dichotomies. Armed with this diverse, plethora of knowledge, you are a species caught in the flux of evolutionary development. Your newfound knowledge and skills will be crucial to your survival – your ability to adapt and thrive when challenged by your superiors will determine your fate."*

2. What would you suggest as a method for preparation on the day of the exam?

*"It is a delicate balance. Whichever method you choose to prepare by, keep this in mind. If you submit too little during the written portion, you will likely have enough energy to live another day, but you will have perhaps abandoned any chance at setting yourself up for the long run. On the other hand, if you over-exert yourself on the first attempt, you may have nothing left in store for winter. As is the nature of things, you must strike that critical balance in order to thrive and maintain sustainability. On the day of the oral exam, speak softly, yet assertively. Use scientific words to impress, but do not forget about the importance of the message. Remember your audience. And always conclude on a bitter-sweet note of doom and gloom, mixed with just the right amount of hope and optimism for the future."*

3. How would you fit reading all of those books into your already busy schedule?

*"First of all, in the world of E-Books, Kindles, and I-Pads, I would NEVER read two hundred paperback books. Think of all the trees! At least try to get them from the library. Secondly, as always, treat the ecosystem of knowledge with the respect it deserves. The web of knowledge is one that is hung by the most delicate of fibres. Either too few or too many books read in one particular area of historical minutia are bound lead to an unbalance of knowledge. In the subconscious quest to stick to only preferential material, one can easily disrupt the brain's natural balance of thought and database organization. The web can come undone – as easily as it is spun, it can fall to tatters. The good news is that it is not too late. There is still time – if future generations of comps takers are willing – to turn back the clock and make good, sustainable choices for the future."*

### 1. *Night of the Living Dead* (1968)

George A. Romero single-handedly redefined the horror genre with his 1968 entry, *Night of the Living Dead*. Decidedly in the more traditional, 'slow zombie' category, Romero's film gathers most of its scary factor from the notion of being trapped and isolated in a farmhouse under siege by a mindless horde of undead. What the zombies lack in speed, they gain in numbers - that, and the fact that the protagonists are all trapped in a house and must survive both the zombies and each other's growing fear and paranoia. This is no *28 Days Later*. The suspense here - much like the zombies' slow advance - takes its time to build to its exciting, and inevitable crescendo.

### 2. *The Exorcist* (1973)

Possibly the ultimate scary movie, *The Exorcist* still manages to scare audiences nearly forty years after its release. Pea soup flies in this horror classic as actress Linda Blair floats above her bed, spins her head around, and spouts green vomit and hatred towards all who try and save the trapped little girl inside from the Devil himself. Despite its considerable age, this film holds up reasonably well among today's hyper-violent, uber creepy horror flicks.

### 3. *Poltergeist* (1982)

"They're here!" An absolute horror classic, *Poltergeist* truly captures the essence of the haunted house of horrors genre in all its glory. Complete with a fantastically campy - 'house was built on a desecrated cemetery' - plotline, and combined with the addition of a four-foot-tall medium with a creepy voice, this film is a win all around. Moving furniture, a portal to hell lurking in every corner, and creepy-crawly raw steak making the rounds, all contribute to what is a must-see Halloween classic. Just be ready for cheesy make-up effects, rubber zombies, and possibly a new fascination with *Long Island Medium*.

### 4. *Beetlejuice* (1988)

Tim Burton's creative genius is truly let out of the bottle in his 1988 film, *Beetlejuice*. Following the tale of a family of freshly minted ghosts (a father, mother, and rebellious/irreverent teenage daughter), this is a story of a recently deceased family whose home has been overrun by its new owners, a family of insufferable yuppies and their obnoxious offspring. Floundering in the underworld, the dearly departed family turns to the help of a mischievous huckster, the titular character played brilliantly by a dishevelled, grimy, and absolutely brilliant, Michael Keaton. Whatever you do, do not say his name three times!

### 5. *The Simpsons: 'Treehouse of Horror, I - V'* (1990-1994)

Everybody knows that *The Simpsons* was best in its first handful of seasons. The same rings true, not surprisingly, for its coveted Halloween specials known as the *Treehouse of Horror* series. For the uninitiated, these were the episodes that fans looked forward to each year with wild anticipation - the best material seemingly saved up for the yearly spoofs of Halloween classics. Among the most notable segments (there were usually three mini-stories per installment), are, '*The Raven*', '*The Devil and Homer Simpson*', and '*The Shinning*'. '*The Raven*', of course, is a brilliant take on Edgar Allan Poe's classic 1845 poem of the same name, with Homer as the main character, and Bart stepping in as an anthropomorphized raven. '*The Devil and Homer*' sees Homer make a deal with the Devil (ironically played by religious do-gooder Ned Flanders). Perhaps the most well-remembered - and quoted - spoof comes with, '*The Shinning*', in which the Simpson family relives the horror of Stephen King's 1980 film, *The Shinning*, with Homer playing the part of Jack Nicholson, and Groundskeeper Willie saving the day.

## 10 Rules for Surviving the Office Halloween Party

So, you are all excited to attend this year's office Halloween party – costume sorted out, Google Maps directions printed out, and poison of choice selected. What could go wrong??? We here at, *The Document*, have taken it upon ourselves to provide our cherished readers with a brief, yet essential guide to surviving the office Halloween party with grace, dignity, and style.

### The Rules:

1. Wear a damn costume! (This should be simple, but time and time again, we will inevitably see the Debbie Downer at the party who for whatever reason could not be bothered to wear a costume)
2. Before making your costume selection, think about what character best suits you and your personality. (Spandex is a privilege, not a right. Unless you are Mr./Mrs. Universe, this applies to you.)
3. Show a little skin – but not too much. (This is the one official social function of the year where dressing a little on the wild side will be ok. All nearly-naked gladiator and super-sexy witch outfits are best for the night out with your casual friends.)
4. Know Thyself. (When it comes to a room full of your professional peers and an unlimited supply of alcohol, things can get complicated faster than you can drunk text: OMG! What happened???)
5. No awkward hookups. (This should be a no-brainer. No matter how seductive that special someone appears in their best Han Solo or Princess Leia get-up, this is not the time or place for bad behaviour. You will thank us in the morning.)
6. No complaining. (There is a time and a place for griping, and an office party is not one of them. There is nothing worse than getting an earful about work through the mouth slit of a plastic, Wal-Mart Batman mask. Especially if they do so in that weird, Christian Bale, Batman voice.)
7. Candy and chocolate are your friends. (We all like to be healthy – at least we like to tell ourselves we do. However, when confronted with that inevitably massive bowl of goodies, do your best to go to a happy place and dig in guilt free. Everyone will be the better for it.)
8. Play appropriate music. (For hosts, this is an absolute must. No matter how hard your eyes might roll at the thought of hearing *The Monster Mash* or *Thriller* one more time, it is a Halloween must-have on any playlist.)
9. Shake that thing! (Awkward dancing is a rite of passage for all and any office/work social function. It cannot be avoided – much like its far more menacing cousin, karaoke – you WILL partake.)
10. Have fun. (It is sad that this even has to be brought up, but alas... The office Halloween party is perhaps the most fun you will have all year with your colleagues, so enjoy!)

## New Frontiers Graduate History Conference

Fellow Historians,

The New Frontiers 2013 conference co-chairs are pleased to announce the 17th annual New Frontiers Graduate History Conference, being held Feb. 21-23, 2013 at York University. New Frontiers is a great opportunity to present your original research in a friendly and professional environment and it looks great on your CV. We would like to encourage all York History students to submit abstracts and present papers at this year's conference. An abstract is a short paragraph outlining the general argument and structure of your presentation. Be sure to tell us why your research is exciting and to select a presentation topic that will easily fit into a 15-minute time slot.

We look forward to reading your abstracts!

-Mary Franks, Carly Murdoch, and Sara Howdle

Send all abstracts to: [yorknewfrontiers@gmail.com](mailto:yorknewfrontiers@gmail.com)

More details to follow in next month's *The Document*

