

Ezra Cheifetz's "Seleucid, Symbols, and Solstices" is an essay about an oddity, or to wit: how might an odd object from Ezra's life in this material-minded world be open to metaphor and perhaps a new existence in meaning and breadth within the writer's life. The assignment from Professor Traci O'Connor's Seminar in Composition class tasked students to question, explore, and write from critical inquiry, and Ezra, prodded by the material driven effects of the Christmas tree, discursively expounded on its history, its Americanization as a commercial entity, and how this introduced what they termed the "Christmasization" of Chanukah, a Jewish festival.

The Composition Awards Committee awards this essay given the speed in which it takes up the assignment requirements, but also because of Ezra's critical focus about the role Christmas celebrations have on American Jewish people's desire to reaffirm their celebration of Chanukah. The essay is thought-provoking in its historical methodology just as they open with a descriptively humorous, if not critical, rendezvous with friends, igniting a deeply rich conversation about processes that invite us to inquire about the world we live in and how might we make meaning out of those *odd things* that bring our lived experiences into focus. Ezra's essay used a variety of modes and genres of discourse, and their reliance on the interrogative to invite conversation felt impacting to the Composition Awards Committee's choice to honor this stellar example of original student writing at the University of Pittsburgh.